

MARIE SETON



FILM AS AN ART

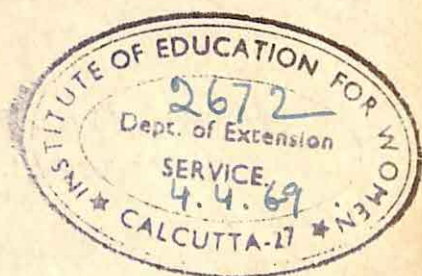
AND FILM APPRECIATION



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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AUDIO-VISUAL EDUCATION
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
TRAINING NEW DELHI

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FILM AS AN ART
AND
FILM APPRECIATION



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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AUDIO-VISUAL
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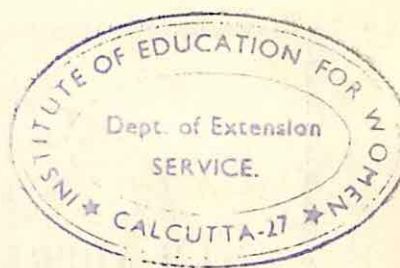
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING
114, SUNDER NAGAR, NEW DELHI-11.

First Edition, March, 1964—3,000 copies

Price Rs. 1.25nP.

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Cover design by D. B. BAKSHI



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By the Same Author

FILM APPRECIATION—THE ART OF FIVE DIRECTORS

The monograph gives extremely interesting reading material to those who want to know what film appreciation means and how to organize film appreciation clubs in educational institutions.

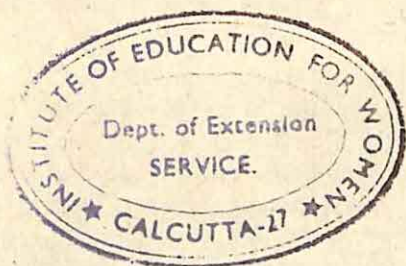
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Film Appreciation—The World of Robert Flaherty—Note on the Soviet Cinema—Vittoria de Sica, the Man with Two Faces David Lean, The Art of Craftsmanship—Satyajit Ray, The Pather Panchali Trilogy—How to Commence Film Appreciation—Bibliography—Appendix of Flow-Diagram

Price Rs. 1.50

Copies available from—

CHIEF PUBLICATION OFFICER
Publication Unit, N.C.E.R.T.
114, Sundernagar, New Delhi-11



I

HOW TO DEVELOP FILM APPRECIATION

IN 'THE ART OF FIVE DIRECTORS', the first of two pamphlets on film appreciation and twelve major films acquired by the Central Film Library, readers were introduced to the work of Robert Flaherty, Sergei Eisenstein, Vittorio de Sica, David Lean and Satyajit Ray. Each of these directors has made, or is making, a unique or highly individual contribution to cinematography. Each has produced one or more film classics.

There has never been a single phrase to exactly define a film classic. But a film classic is a picture which, many people have agreed, is exceptional and which is of lasting interest. It is the cinema's parallel to the literary classic—a film which people see over and over again, and which appears to exert fascination and interest in up-coming generations. Sergei Eisenstein's *Potemkin* is unquestionably such a film, and much more recently Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* has firmly established itself in the 'film classics' class even though it was released only in 1955.

It was my thought that the work of these five directors—American, Russian, Italian, British and Indian—would interest readers and capture the imagination of those who find themselves interested in films and film appreciation, a subject with a great

many facets. Frequently it seems that people's serious interest in films and further enquiry into the subject of cinema, is born from seeing or hearing about a particularly remarkable and dynamic film.

Potemkin had such an effect on many people in different countries during the years between the two World Wars, and it was one of the films which led to the creation of film societies and film appreciation. Vittorio de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, which was first shown to Indian audiences in 1952, is another film which has made the utmost impact on the imagination of people sensitive to an appreciation of film as an art. This film helped to inspire a new type of film in India and in other countries too.

While what is called a 'film sense' cannot be forced on people, the slightest serious interest in good films leads to the emergence in many people of a perceptive and discriminating 'film sense'. Because today the cinema exerts an enormous influence upon people all over the world, no one should be indifferent to films or prejudiced against films merely because almost every country produces a greater number of inferior if expensive entertainment pictures than films of lasting merit. No one condemns literature because many inferior books are written and published. The more films anyone sees and the more one knows about cinema, the more interesting does the subject become.

In his preface to the 1949 revised edition of his famous book, 'The Film Till Now', Paul Rotha comments : 'The Screen's reflection of a people's character and ideals and tradition, its unlimited power to create goodwill and promote understanding, its unequalled importance as a medium for public communication are motives which have been largely overlooked in the scramble to monopolize this universal show-business.....Almost the whole potential of the cinema as an instrument of public education has been neglected by the industry's controllers in their pursuit of big returns'.

This is admittedly true of the film industries of all countries, or in those countries where there is political and governmental control of the cinema, films may be mainly regarded from the point of view of mass consumption. Yet with all the obstacles

in the way of the production of intelligent and mature films, many such films have been made. Film appreciation is concerned with these films and enabling people to separate the chaff from the grain in cinema. Film appreciation aims to cultivate a taste for the grain.

In 'The Art of Five Directors' it was demonstrated that individual films, like all major works of art, are not transitory in their appeal. To illustrate : Immediately after the completion of the first pamphlet, two significant events took place. The Calcutta Film Society, with nearly 600 members, held a festival of Eisenstein Films. Five of his films were presented. For every performance the theatre was packed with members whose friends had begged to be allowed to come. A public discussion about the five films was held with two of Bengal's younger film directors, Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak, taking part along with three other people. This is an example of film appreciation being carried to an audience of some 700 people.

The other event which is encouraging is that in Calcutta and Delhi at the same time the general public demonstrated a most emphatic support of better Indian films. People had been crowding to buy tickets to see Satyajit Ray's film *Teen Kanya*, a picture composed of three short stories by Rabindranath Tagore. The success of this film belies the oft-repeated cliché that artistic films cannot be a public success in India.

Though it cannot be statistically proved, since no check was made as to what attracted each member of the audience in Delhi, perhaps part of the support for *Teen Kanya* in Delhi can be explained by the fact that in the last two years a considerable effort has been made there to encourage a cultivated appreciation of good films. This has been mainly through the holding of film festivals from various countries—France, Japan, Sweden, West Germany, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union.

The Delhi Film Society has been organizing study group meetings for discussions on films. These study group meetings have proved to be most profitable for students of cinema. The Second International Film Festival held in India in 1961 also proved, beyond doubt, that the public is becoming more and more selective. All such efforts contribute to a spread of the

idea of film appreciation, so does every intelligent article on films which appears.

It is significant that in all countries it has been students who have been responsive towards the showing of the best films. The very earliest film societies were organized in the Sorbonne University in Paris and Oxford and Cambridge in England. This was in the year 1925. Somewhat more than a decade later, the most firmly rooted film society in the United States was the society which called itself the Documentary Film Group of the University of Chicago.

These societies set an example in that they not only presented the world's best films to their members but from the outset sought to study cinema through arranging from time to time lecture by experts and those working at film-making. Thus, they were pioneers in film appreciation.

This trend is now evident in India. Currently, Agra University Film Club (founded in the Institute of Social Sciences in collaboration with the Hindi and Linguistics Department in August, 1960) is developing film appreciation on the most thoroughly thought-out lines. For every fortnightly programme a 'Filmclubnews' is prepared to stimulate discussion about the films which have been shown and are to be shown. A great deal of valuable data culled from many sources is made available to the members in this way. At every performance there is discussion.

The University Film Council and the Federation of Film Societies of India have been trying to broadbase the movement for film appreciation, by forming 'Gown' and 'Town' film societies in as many cities and towns as possible.

It is no less significant that two of the most recent film societies to be organized are in specialised institutes, the Central Food and Technological Research Institute in Mysore and Delhi's All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, where immediately upon formation more students and staff members wished to join than could be seated in the Institute's auditorium with its 300 seats.

Todate, the Agra University Film Club, as also the society at Aligarh University, have based their programmes almost exclusively on the films discussed in the pamphlet 'The Art of

Five Directors', and on the films discussed in this one. Such films as *Bicycle Thieves* and *Pather Panchali* were subjected at Agra to searching analysis by the members. An effort was made to discover what were the precise elements in these films which made them exceptional in their appeal as works of art. This pursuit of a detailed and consistent film appreciation study commenced with the adaptation of notes similar to those given for each film in 'The Art of Five Directors', and in this interrelated pamphlet.

No arbitrary directions can be given as to how a particular group, or film society, can most effectively use the collection of film appreciation pictures in the Central Film Library. One can say that the films can be presented in various combinations and to illustrate different points. For example, the Eisenstein film *Potemkin* or Jean Vigo's film *L'Atalante*, discussed further on, can be used to illustrate at least three different aspects ; the general history of cinema ; as representative of Russian and French film ; or for the study in detail of their director's work.

It has been found that undoubtedly people get more out of any film, particularly, any outstanding film, if informative notes about the film and its director's work are prepared. The purpose of these two pamphlets on film appreciation is to supply such material. But the information given here is most effectively used if it is adapted and suited to the level of each group which is going to see the films. The material should be simplified for any new group.

Over and over again in different countries it has been proved that a film society, or a group showing films, has much greater vitality and is more firmly rooted if it engages in discussion about its programmes. The members, or the spectators, become active rather than passive participants.

In order to instigate discussion about the films, or to give a short introductory talk about them, it is important that the people presenting the film-show, view the films themselves before the presentation, and form their own opinion. Canada is one of the countries where the greatest amount of attention has been given to aiding people in conducting discussion about films. The National Film Board of Canada with offices at 13, Golf Links, New Delhi, has an extremely effective film *Let's Talk About Films*, which indicates a method which can be employed for discussion about any type of

film, be it a feature film or a documentary, or an educational subject.

This pamphlet aims to give the reader not only specific information about a number of important film appreciation pictures held in the Central Film Library, and not covered in 'The Art of Five Directors', but to give the prospective user a glimpse of the scope of cinematography. Also discussed is a small group of films acquired by the Library to help people develop a general knowledge of films and the history of cinema. These films include some examples of the early work of Charlie Chaplin, and the still earlier compilation of Actualities; *Drawings That Walk and Talk*, which traces the history of attempted animation in art and the culmination of this effort in the cartoon film; and the history of the documentary film, and its influence, in the four-part picture, *Film and Reality*. Mention is also made of some examples of specially prepared films intended to aid a more detailed understanding of film appreciation; for example, Basil Wright's searching analysis of the structure of Carol Reed's film *Odd Man Out*.

THE FEATURE FILMS

In 'The Art of Five Directors' only feature films were discussed, although considerable detail was given about Satyajit Ray's remarkable documentary biography, *Rabindranath Tagore*. The present pamphlet covers further feature films, though they reflect aspects of the film production of the countries producing them. Thus, a brief picture is etched of the French cinema which has played a major international role in the development of the film as an art form. The Soviet Union, as shown in the first pamphlet through the work of Sergei Eisenstein, has contributed much to the exploration of the film medium and to a realisation of the social force of the cinema. But the Russians have also excelled in transferring literature to the screen, and they have paid great attention to the historical and biographical film. These two elements are exemplified by mark Donskoi's two pictures based on the autobiography of the author, Maxim Gorky.

My third section, dealing with the story film, introduces the reader to the most many-sided Asian film industry, that of Japan.

Artistically speaking, the Japanese film dominates the film production of Asia and, on the international scene, Japan ranks among the countries producing the largest number of artistically important films. Japanese cinema has certain outstanding qualities, especially in its technical refinement and care of detail.

But cinematography has many facets, and film appreciation encompasses a study of each and every facet as any group develops it. It is concerned with any type, style or classification of film, so long as the film in question is *effective* cinema. Film appreciation is not directly concerned with pictures which are cinematically poor and undistinguished, except to the extent of comparing an inferior film with a superior one. For example, *Aadmi*, a quite early film of V. Shantaram, is *cinematically* a superior film in its conception to some of its director's later and commercially very successful films.

There are some films which though uneven having a few outstandingly effective sequences alternating with others which are either undistinguished or not convincing are important films to study. One such film is the Hindi picture, *Do Bigha Zamin*, directed by Bimal Roy. Here is an excellent example of a picture which has something important to say, and has some exceptionally fine sequences, and yet falls short of being a major film. This is a picture with a serious aim and several highly dynamic sequences such as the race between the rickshaw-pullers. But suddenly this otherwise realistic film tips over into artifice which becomes melodramatic. It seeks, on the one hand, to be a new artistic departure, yet, on the other, obvious 'box-office' considerations are crudely injected.

'Box-office' considerations are a factor in the film production of all countries ; but these have been a particularly anti-artistic force in the development of the Indian cinema where the distributors and exhibitors have played a most tyrannical role. It would be a very good exercise in film appreciation for any group to show *Do Bigha Zamin*, widely considered to be the most outstanding Indian film prior to *Pather Panchali*, and then to show *Pather Panchali*, a film of indisputably integrated style, and then discuss both films. This has been done by the Agra University Film Club.

It is important to examine what are the elements which detract from thematic and stylistic unity in Indian feature films ; what, for

example, are the compromises which mar *Do Bigha Zamin*? This film is singled out from the collection of Hindi feature films in the Central Film Library because its aim is high, much of it is truly cinematic and not a transcription of a theatrical drama to the screen. Yet, with all this, when compared with a film where all the component elements have been united in a harmonious balance, Bimal Roy's sincerely conceived film can be seen to be disunited.

People concerned with film appreciation can teach themselves a great deal by observing *Do Bigha Zamin* with care, and discriminating between the very evident cinematic qualities of a sequence such as the opening one and the rickshaw race and the essential *non-cinematic* and theatrical presentation of the scene where there is an attempted rape of the village wife.

In *Pather Panchali* there are no such switches in film sense. From the first shot to the last, every scene and every shot has the same uncompromising film sense and none of the actors suddenly move out of character. There is an undeviating line of development holding the whole film together. In both films the influence of the documentary film is evident. In the last fifteen to twenty years many feature films produced in different countries—the United States, Britain, Italy and Mexico, to mention but four—have reflected this influence. The history of this influence is clearly illustrated in the film mentioned earlier, *Film and Reality*.

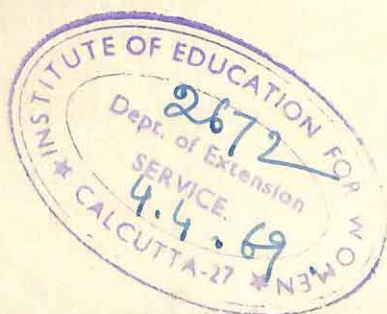
THE DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Though one must not make too hard and fast generalizations, it was in part to escape the domination internationally of the commercial film industries that experimentally minded film-makers reached out to express themselves in what came to be called the documentary film. This is the second group of films I deal with further on, taking a few of the most outstanding Indian and foreign documentaries held in the Central Film Library.

Such documentaries as the British *Drifters* and *Night Mail*, *The River*, produced in the United States in the mid-1930's and Films Division's *Khajuraho* (1956) are masterpieces of cinema just as worthy of detailed study as *Louisiana Story* or *Bicycle Thieves*. Indeed, it was in the field of documentary films where experiments



A STILL FROM *KHAJURAHÔ*





A SCENE FROM *SONG OF CEYLON*

with sound in relation to images—or what is termed audio-visual—were at first easiest to make.

For the first years after the advent of sound (1927-29) the story film with few exceptions was in all countries first and foremost 'a talkie'. Dialogue became supreme. Thus, for a time, the sound film took a step backwards towards a form resembling that of a stage play in photography. It took some time for the expressive image to once again dominate film-making and for sound to be integrated. Gradually, dialogue was reduced and took its place as a component element.

It was in the realm of the rising documentary film movement, in which Britain took a lead, that there was opportunity to experiment with the relationship of images to sound of various kinds, the sound being edited gradually with the same expressiveness as had been achieved with images during the last years of the silent film era. A very important example of audio-visual development in the cinema is afforded by Basil Wright's documentary classic, *Night Mail*. This is a picture which every group wishing to understand the capacities of the film for communicating ideas and information in an artistic and truly cinematic way should see and discuss.

It should be stressed here that film appreciation is not confined to films that might be called 'art for art's sake', but it embraces films that are basically educative in intent. Hence, grouped in the film appreciation pictures are Lindsay Anderson's very expressive film about the teaching of the deaf, *Thursday's Children*, and the American picture, *The Quiet One*, portraying a psychiatric case history.

A film which is concerned with imparting information, or educating the public to what is going on, for example, *Thursday's Children* or *Mayurakshi Dam* are infinitely more effective in their communication role when they are, as in the case of the two pictures mentioned, *good cinema*, rather than if they are a pedestrian catalogue of imaged facts reiterated in a long-winded commentary which leaves nothing to the imagination.

FILM APPRECIATION AND ITS SCOPE

Film appreciation is all-embracing. It ignores no category of film, except as mentioned earlier, the mass of entertainment

films which are of no cinematic consequence. Therefore, a small section is devoted to cartoon, puppet and silhouette films, and attention is drawn to the unique audio-visual experiments of Canada's Norman McLaren.

Since the Central Film Library's collection of films does not cover the whole history of cinematography, a chronology of cinema is added at the end in order to aid the reader and user to grasp the sweep of film history and be able to fit the special films in the Library into their proper niche of film development.

It is, however, suggested that silent films like *Nanook of the North* and *Drifters* should not be shown until some appreciation of the elements of what makes for a memorable sound film are established. Groups are not very likely to be interested in the distant history of the cinema (except that the films of Charlie Chaplin eternally charm) until they have become vitally interested in films as a medium of expression. Nor is a picture like *Film and Reality* suitable for showing to a newly formed group or film society. Perhaps the most lively film to indicate the development of cinema is *Drawings That Walk and Talk*. Though this film concerns the history of the cartoon film, similar developments took place in the story film and the documentary.

Admittedly, the main problem with film appreciation is to get it started and to draw in the members of the audience to an active participation. The less pedantic the approach the more spontaneous is the reaction likely to be. Once people take to discussing films, they very quickly develop a taste for it. Very soon they find that every film becomes more interesting, the more objectively it is watched and analyzed.

THE DOMINANT ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR

Time and time again it bears repeating that in the cinema the film director, even if his name is not generally known to the public, is the dominating force behind the creation of every film. He is, as it were, the leader of an orchestra. It is the distinctiveness of his style, or his lack of distinctiveness which makes a film stand out from the glut of pictures, or merely rank as average. The star system intrudes to blur this basic fact. It should never be

forgotten that behind the actor, famous or unknown, stands the director of the film.

It can never be forgotten that film-making is only the most expensive method of artistic creation (hence, the great number of 'box-office' pictures of solely entertainment value in comparison to those films which are actually an exposition of the film medium's potentiality). It must also be remembered that the making of a film is dependent upon a variety of mechanical and technical processes. These are explained in the pamphlet, 'Film Appreciation—The Art of Five Directors'.

Only one or two artists mentioned in this pamphlet—Lotte Reiniger for one and Norman McLaren for another—have practically eliminated the collective aspect of film-making. All the rest, including makers of cartoon and puppet films, have to depend on help from a technical staff, not to mention actors and people appearing in their films. For example, almost all makers of cartoon films have to employ a number of animators.

Whether a film is produced in Tokyo, Bombay, Moscow, Paris, London or Hollywood, it is still subject to certain standard processes. For example, the most elementary fact is that no film can be made without celluloid, celluloid for negative and positive prints. There has to be a motion-picture camera or no film can be made. The exception is certain films of Norman McLaren who has made some 'cameraless' films by painting and scratching images directly on to his negative.

Every film is bound to be produced in accordance with certain technical rules. There is greater rigidity as to the material to be faced by the film-maker than that which is faced by any painter who can utilize rock, palm leaves, silk, paper, canvas, a wooden board, or treated concrete or stucco walls, in order to record his vision. On the other hand, whatever the limitations, the film-maker can achieve what no painter can achieve—movement.

Whether a film is as seemingly simple in design as Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique*, discussed further on, or as complexly patterned with the characterizations of numerous actors as in Mark Donskoi's *Childhood of Maxim Gorky*, the cinema depends for its effectiveness upon its *visual force* and the movement within the limits of camera's 'frame'. There is no instance of even the

most talented still photographer having become a very famous film director.

What is more, there are only a rather few and scattered examples of outstanding theatre directors, playwrights and actors having been equally effective as film directors. Four who have succeeded in both fields are Jean Cocteau in France, Laurence Olivier in Britain, Elia Kazan in the United States, and Vittorio de Sica in Italy.

This reiterates the fact that films to be effective in filmic terms are entirely different from theatre productions. In films which are true to the potential of their own medium, dialogue is not of primary importance. The marvel of such films as Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*, discussed in 'Five Directors', or Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante*, discussed in this pamphlet, is that these films can be appreciated without knowledge of Bengali or French, and even without sub-titles. This illustrates that the talent for making films which are true cinema is a specifically visual talent; the gift for telling a story in a series of images and sensing when to change from long shot to medium shot, close-up to very large close-up. All memorable film directors have a sense of rhythm which is correct for the presentation of their subject.

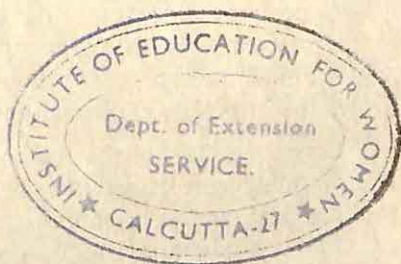
For example, if a film like *Wages of Fear* had a slow tempo the whole of its dynamic quality would be lost; but if the Japanese film, *Children of Hiroshima*, had the violent and intense rhythm of some Japanese films it would become far too melodramatic. The tempo of a film and also its length are very important factors.

The intensely *visual* aspect of cinematography was realised very early by the French pioneer, Georges Melies, who brought all the tricks of the magician to the cinema within the first decade of the cinema's existence (1896-1906). Another Frenchman, Emil Cohl, who invented the animated cartoon in 1907, (an example of his early films is shown in *Drawings That Walk and Talk*), was no less aware that the film 'talks' through gesture and movement. This is the 'language of cinema' which transcends words.

Between 1910 and 1914, the visual language of the film took a great leap forward with the advent of the first great American film

director, the late David Wark Griffith, one of the giants of cinema. A compilation of Griffith's work is in the Central Film Library. Then, in 1914, came the first appearance on the screen of the greatest and most universally appreciated actor—Charlie Chaplin—the mime of mimes who created a world recognized and beloved character, one with no voice for more than fifteen years, but who yet spoke most eloquently to all the world's heart and mind.

Chaplin, now 72, spans the entire lifetime of cinematography. His art, and its evolution from the early Chaplin compilation held in the Central Film Library, to the film *Limelight*, which has been seen in India, symbolizes the growth of the film and its enrichment over a period of sixty-seven years.



2

THE FEATURE FILM

I. NOTES ON THE FRENCH CINEMA

FRANCE IS THE NATION which won the competitive race in perfecting the motion-picture film to the point where the Lumiere brothers were able to publicly project the first 'movie' in 1895. America and Britain were runners-up in the long contest to fully evolve the invention of cinematography.

Between 1895 and the outbreak of the 1914-18 World War, French films, with British films running as a second, dominated the international market in film distribution, and French experiments in film production influenced almost all countries. As mentioned already, the earliest of noted pioneers in film making belonged to France—Georges Melies—who came to the cinema from a theatre of magic. By the end of 1896 Melies discovered stop-shot photography (a procedure of stopping the camera and arresting the action at a given moment during the taking of a shot so that, for example, a pumpkin will appear in the finished film to change suddenly into a coach). This invention permitted Melies to make many trick photography films. He soon progressed from films based on magic tricks to narrative plots and fairy-tale

spectacles such as his famous film, *A Trip to the Moon*, based on the book of Jules Verne and serving as the first science-fiction film. Melies' fantasies delighted people all over the world.

Throughout the history of the French cinema this line of fantasy and trick film has been maintained in various types of pictures, all of them experimental in character or, as the designation is in France—'avant-garde'. A scene like that of the schoolboys floating in slow-motion in *Zero de Conduite*, Jean Vigo's film which is discussed further on, or the fairy-tale aspect of Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*, or his 'surrealist' films on the legend of Orpheus, retain in a highly refined form the elements of trick and magic which were introduced into French film production at its very beginning.

Fernand Zecca, another versatile pioneer contemporary with Melies, attempted, among other experiments, the hand colouring of films and reconstructing topical events, for example, the 1905 Russian sailors' mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin*, this being the same subject as the great Russian film director, Sergei Eisenstein, fashioned into the masterpiece *Potemkin*, twenty years later. In 1907, Emil Cohl, who was still alive in the mid-1930's invented and produced the first animated cartoon film.

But the 1914-18 World War destroyed France's international film distribution and the world monopoly passed to the United States. Film production in France had been a highly organized business, but following the First World War and the contraction of the world-wide market for French pictures, film-making in France became much less of a business and very decidedly more of an art carried on by a number of highly individualistic artists who were, in general, now drawn from a more educated and artistic background than the film-makers of the English-speaking countries.

Like film-makers in Germany, the Scandinavian countries and the Soviet Union during the early years of the 1920's, film-makers in France were intellectual people and people with roots in the literary and art world. This explains the experimental and 'avant-garde' (advance guard) character of French film production following the First World War. The close relations between painters and cinematographers is evident in the awareness of composition and visual beauty of French films.

One of the early experimental films, *Ballet Mecanique*, was the work of the major painter, Fernand Leger. Jean Cocteau, the poet, painter, dramatist and theatre director, has periodically for the last thirty years turned his attention to film making. The sons of the great French painter, August Renoir—Jean and Pierre—both devoted themselves to the cinema, Jean Renoir emerging as one of France's most important film directors whose film, *The Grand Illusion* (1937), is one of the most memorable masterpieces of the cinema.

Renoir, like many others, at first belonged to the 'avant-garde' movement which served, and still serves in France, as a training ground. This also applies to Rene Clair, one of France's most noted directors who created a very distinctive style of film satire with music and songs, a delightful example being *The Million* (1930). An example of the influence of the 'avant-garde' is the famous film oddity directed by Jean Vigo—*Zero de Conduite* (*Zero for Conduct*) which is discussed in detail below. The most recent film of Jean Cocteau, *The Testament of Orphee* (1959) who, at 70 years of age, is still regarded as the 'enfant terrible'—terrible child—of French art, is a perfect example of the persistence of the 'avant-garde' in French cinema. French cinema is extremely diverse, being probably the most many-sided cinema of any nation.

Rene Clair, writing of his nation's film production, says: 'I would like to have all the young people who dream of devoting themselves to the cinema to take a trip around the world. Far from France, they would discover what the French School is, which seen from too close up, strikes us as being difficult to define, but which for a foreigner has a very definite style despite the great variety of its individual works. This variety, we owe perhaps as much to our faults as to our virtues; as much to our taste for independence as to our weakness for lack of discipline'.

Clair, Renoir and Julien Duvivier all directed films abroad during the last World War. Transplanted, the French directors lost their character and none of their foreign-made films were very striking. One of the reasons for this is that French film production has almost always been on a small budget and when French directors have had larger budgets abroad, they found it disconcerting rather than helpful.

People outside of France have always had definite impressions of French film styles. At one end of the scale there has been the highly polished and sophisticated French film dominated by the personality of actors like the late Sacha Guitry or the everyyoung Maurice Chevalier. An example of this type of film was *The Great Manoeuvre*—Rene Clair's film—shown at the 1959 French film festival in New Delhi. At the other end of the scale have been a number of unique films depicting rural and regional life such as Marcel Pagnol's *Harvest* (1937) and his Marius series laid in Marseilles, the production of which commenced in 1932. Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) and Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique* (1947), both films which are discussed further on, are notable for capturing the poetry of simple rather than sophisticated life.

While Rene Clair, and more recently Jacques Tati, have delighted in the creation of slightly grotesque characters, a conspicuous number of French directors, among them Julien Duvivier, Jacques Becker, Rene Clement, Marcel Carne and Robert Bresson (also very recently Alan Resnais), have created the most powerful psychological dramas. At one time it used to be said that no directors could put reality on the screen, particularly, that of personal life, with the insight of the French. Henri-George Clouzot's harsh but extremely forceful *Wages of Fear* (1952) is such an example.

French cinema has managed to encompass the utmost frivolity and quaintness, as in the comedies of the funny-faced comedian, Fernandel, as well as the deep and serious studies of childhood and adolescence as *Poil de Carotte* (*Carrot Tops*), *The Maternal*, a masterpiece in the study of young children, and the devastating *Secret Game*, which depicts the innocent cruelty of childhood. No less strikingly in contrast are such costume films as the well-known *Carnaval in Flanders*, directed by Jacques Feyder, which is so conspicuously realistic in its reconstruction of a period, and Cocteau's poetic fairy-tale, *Beauty and the Beast*. Three of the cinema's most impressive biographical films are French productions: Abel Gance's monumental *Napoleon*, using three interlocking screens years before the advent of the widescreen technique; his *Beethoven* with its compelling sound effects, and the last great silent film—*The Passion of Joan of Arc*—where Carl Dreyer,

a Dane, used enormous close-ups more effectively than any other director has perhaps ever done.

Often far removed from contemporary life, as for example, the famous Marcel Carne film *Children of Paradise* (1944), recent films like Robert Bresson's *The Condemned Man Escapes* and Alan Resnais' *Hiroshima My Love* are carved out from reality.

A commentator on the present state of French cinema has stated that 'the four principal branches which constitute the essential part of any theatrical art (meaning story films) are present and thriving in French film production since the war: tragedy, contemporary psychological drama, comedy and farce. For the great representatives of each of these styles have shown in their work a profound understanding of period'.

The four French films discussed in detail here represent different glimpses of the French cinema which, judged by the general level of its production, is very possibly the most mature of national film industries. France has a remarkably high number of outstanding directors who are particularly well served by French actors.

Apart from its full-length feature films, in the last ten years France has produced a number of memorable short films, for example, the compelling plea against war, *Hotel des Invalides*, the enchanting *History of the Golden Fish*, the charming *Red Balloon*, and several very interesting short films directed by Alan Resnais, two of them on the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh and Picasso. Resnais has now graduated to the feature film with the powerful *Hiroshima My Love*. As long as there is French film production there will be interesting experiments of a highly individual kind.

Jean Vigo

Vigo's fame rests on fewer films than that of any other noted director—four. Upon these four films—*A Propos de Nice*, *Taris*, a short film about the swimming champion, *Zero de Conduite* and *L'Atalante*, a legend was built up about a man who died young and whose life was little known. He planned many other films but they were never realised on celluloid.

Vigo was the son of a very extraordinary father, Eugene Bonaventure de Vigo, known to political history as the anarchist

Almeryda who, like his son, became something of a legend in that he was murdered. Vigo's mother was Emmy Clero, the anarchist's companion. Vigo's thoughts were haunted by the figure of his father after his death, and much of his early life was spent in anarcho-political gypsy camps, a fact which may well explain the character and style of *Zero de Conduite*.

Someone has made the pointed remark that 'not only Vigo's childhood but his whole life was a sort of improvisation; that the films he did make were dragged from a shifting sand of illness, poverty and lack of understanding by some sleight of hand of the Tenth Muse'. *Zero de Conduite* was banned in France for fifteen years, being only revived in 1945. In the early 1930's, Vigo created a sensation and a certain magic was attached to his name.

Zero de Conduite (Zero for Conduct) (1933)

Zero de Conduite, written and directed by Vigo in 1933 is probably the best known of French 'avant-garde' films other than Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet*. In order to understand where *Zero de Conduite* fits into the French cinema, it is necessary to know something of the dominant aspect of French 'avant-garde' films. They were dominated by the idea of 'Surrealism', a style of art which first appeared in painting and which today is most clearly represented by two painters, Max Ernst, a German, and the famous and notorious Spaniard, Salvador Dali. Surrealism, as it has been known for some forty years, has been connected in everybody's mind with the psycho-analytical theories of Freud, though there were, in fact, painters who portrayed images which look surrealist, long before Freud. The theory of Surrealism is based upon images formed by the unconscious mind, or imagery like those appearing in dreams. It means the depiction of the unconscious or irrational in a subjective manner.

Surrealism, as an artistic theory, has inspired a number of films the best known having been produced in France as part of the 'avant-garde' movement. The three most noted films which are known as Surrealist are Luis Bunuel's *Un Chien Andalou*, Germaine Dulac's *Seashell and the Clergyman* and Jean Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet* where the episodes and actions of the characters are suggestive of dreams and irrational urges. *Zero de Conduite* is not so com-

pletely surrealist as these films, but it shows the influence of what can be broadly called surrealist.

The 'plot' of *Zero de Conduite* does not fit into any category of the accepted logical and national 'story', but is rather 'the expression of dreams and thought tangents of an imaginative person', in this case, Jean Vigo, who very likely conceived the scenario on the basis of the memories of his boyhood. The point of view of the film is that the adolescent confined within the framework of school rules looking at the absurd characters of the masters and emotionally rebelling against discipline.

The film opens with a school boy getting into a third class railway carriage. This setting, like all the others in the film, is entirely realistic. The fantasy element in the film comes from the actions and appearance of the characters and not from the settings. The boy, Colin is soon joined at the next station by another boy and the two of them on the journey indulge in antics which are a mixture of the childish and the grown-up.

This scene is enhanced in effect by the music of Maurice Jaubert with its see-saw, puffing rhythm which is very suggestive of the movements of a train. When one of the boys rubs his finger over the surface of a balloon, the music reflects the peculiar sound which a finger rubbed over a balloon gives in actuality. Here is an early example of linking music and the image to produce an imaginative audio-visual effect.

The moment the train arrives at the boys' destination, the subjective viewpoint of the whole film becomes more firmly established: that of the grown-up world being seen through youthful anarchistic eyes. The two boys find a group of their classmates waiting with a master who will take them back to school. Everything, despite the realism of the setting, is a little grotesque.

The master brings his charges to the school dormitory—throughout one of the main settings of the subsequent action. From the first shot in the dormitory with its lines of beds, the masters and their actions are seen through the eyes of rebellious boys. Each action and all the characters (even the monstrously fat cook who has the inappropriate name of Mrs. Stringbean!) is in varying degrees freakish. There is the house master who, wearing a very broad-brimmed black hat, spies on everybody and tip-toes around

on inordinately long legs. The headmaster is a bearded dwarf with a high-pitched voice (like an elderly little boy) who keeps his bowler hat on the mantelpiece he has the utmost difficulty in reaching and he keeps it under a glass dome. There is the gay and popular master who carries a cane, often acts like Charlie Chaplin and is so delightfully absent-minded that when he takes his class out for a walk, he takes the right-hand road while they take the left. He is so charmingly eccentric that he stands on his desk on his hands !

The plot, such as it is, is no more than a dormitory full of boys going through several stages in preparation for a dormitory revolt culminating in a pillow fight and a fantastic sequence of the boys floating like angels in their nightshirts with tapers in their hands. This is the first stage of their revolt against authority. The second and final revolt in which the four ring leaders take part is open rebellion of the boys on the roof-top pelting a group of visiting dignitaries with various objects. The film ends with the boys triumphantly marching over the roof.

Strange as the film is, it is an appealing and entertaining film and in all of cinema there is no more perfect expression of an anarchistic state of mind. One is tempted to say that *Zero de Conduite* is Vigo's subjective hymn of praise to his anarchist father who died when Jean Vigo was twelve.

L'Atalante (1934)

One would never suppose that but a year after *Zero de Conduite*, Vigo would have made such an entirely different film as *L'Atalante*, which is as coherent as the earlier film is, in accepted terms, incoherent. *L'Atalante* is a little gem of French cinema illuminated by a most engaging sincerity and simplicity. The copy available from the Central Film Library has no English sub-titles ; but from the way each action is portrayed in a visually explicit manner audiences can easily follow the story with the help of a synopsis. The film is notable for three things :

The successful way that three well-known screen stars—Michel Simon, Dita Parlo and Jean Deste—have fitted themselves into the characters of unsophisticated people under Jean Vigo's sensitive direction. The critic, Siegfried Kracauer, considers that 'Michel

Simon's '*Pere*' Jules ranks among the greatest characters ever created on the screen by any actor or director'. Dita Parlo as Juliette, the bride, seems to me to give a wonderful character study full of feminine passion and genuineness of feeling.

Vigo has blended the personal story of three characters—Father Jules, the old seaman, Jean and his bride, Juliette—with the documentary-like atmosphere of French barge life on the country's waterways in a most remarkable manner.

Thirdly, there is the collaboration of Jean Vigo and the composer of the music, Maurice Jaubert, which is so effective in relation to sound and image. The musical score is completely French in character with much of it suggestive of folk music. Like the director, Rene Clair, who has also used songs and music with great imaginative effect, Vigo and Jaubert have given *L'Atalante* a specially charming style through their audio-visual effects.

The story unfolds in a way that is easy to follow: 'Father' Jules, an ugly old seaman with the kindest of hearts, now works on a barge named *L'Atalante* together with Jean and a boy bargee. The film opens with Jean bringing his pretty bride, Juliette, from the church door to the barge followed by a long procession of friends. Jean, Juliette, 'Father' Jules and the boy set off on the barge which plies the French canals.

At first Jean and Juliette are very much in love. These scenes are true to the life of ordinary French people. Then they settle down to a routine daily life in cramped quarters with only the doings of 'Father' Jules and his family of cats to enliven the boredom. The camerawork by Boris Kaufman creates the impression of confinement and narrowness of the barge's cabins in a remarkable way by the use of occasional overhead shots.

All goes well with their lives, Jules being ever so kindly as to lend himself to serve as Juliette's tailor's dummy for the clothes she makes herself. But trouble begins when they tie up the barge at a big town. (The sequence showing the work of tying up the barge is an example of audio-visual intensity). 'Father' Jules expands and shows Juliette the trophies of his sailor's life, even down to his elaborately tattooed back and chest. Jean objects. He even hits Juliette and smashes things in a moment of irritation and jealousy. Jules goes off to a palmist and comes back drunk.

The next day Jean and Juliette go to see the town. They visit a cafe where a salesman-cum-magician pesters Jean to buy things for Juliette. Juliette is attracted to the man's dashing manners and the man in an attempt to attract her further insists on dancing with her. Indignant and in a jealous rage, Jean breaks in and a fight ensues. In this sequence a slightly fantastic atmosphere is created.

Sulking, Jean takes Juliette back to the barge. He sulks even more when the impudent salesman comes to the barge. Driving the man away, Jean sulks all evening. In a huff, Juliette decides she will go and see the town by herself. She dresses, walks off the barge and takes a tramcar into the centre of the town where she is caught up by the magic of shop windows and town sights. The music over this sequence is that of discordant jazz.

Meanwhile, Jean in a rage at her leaving the barge, decides to continue the journey and he leaves Juliette behind. Returning she finds the barge gone. After a desperate search she goes to the railway station to buy a ticket home. But her purse is snatched by a boy who runs away. Dazed and bewildered Juliette wanders about fearful of anyone passing or looking at her.

Jean on the barge is now angrier than ever as he plays dominoes with 'Father' Jules. Unshaven and glum, he plunges into the water and there his mind goes back to Juliette on their wedding day. He desires to live and swims to the bank. This short sequence is similar to the scenes of swimming in Vigo's short film *Taris*.

Jean now insists on turning the barge back and they return to where Juliette was left. Jean searches the town for her. Not finding her he is in such despair that he attracts the attention of passers-by. 'Father' Jules takes him to the office of the barge owners where the manager is furious at them bringing back the barge.

Jules then wanders the town despondently in search of Juliette. The bare winter trees in the park symbolically point up the plight that has fallen upon them. But it is Jules who traces Juliette down to where she has found work. He slings her over his shoulder and takes her back to Jean and all ends happily.

Richard Griffith in 'The Film Till Now' comments that 'the

middle and concluding passages of *L'Atalante* challenge comparison with any study of character that has been attempted on the screen..... Their disenchantment is mature in the real meaning of the word. In Vigo, France lost one of her greatest exponents of the cinema'.

Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique* (1946)

It is mentioned in Notes on the French Cinema that on many notable occasions French film directors have given expression to provincial life. One of the most unique examples is *Farrebique*, the idea of which 'is simply to make a record of the work and living of a single farm family, and of the farm itself, and of the surrounding countryside, through one year'.

While other documentary-minded directors have made films based on the seasons of the year, there is no other film to exactly parallel Rouquier's work. The director, who had only made one film before *Farrebique*—a picture about the making of wine vats—was born and lived in the neighbourhood of the farm he selected to portray. Hence he knew the district with unusual intimacy. He had left the district to become a linotyper but then he found his way to film making.

Since this film is not sub-titled in English, and has French sub-titles where certain passages of the dialogue are in a dialect, it is important that its presentation be accompanied by a synopsis.

The outline of the film is as follows :

The farm named *Farrebique* is a family patrimony which has been transferred from father to son since 1830 when it consisted of but one stable. But by the 1940's, the property had expanded and now it included many buildings and considerable acreage. The house built by the grandfather now shows signs of decay and it is time to undertake repairs and improvements.

Over the course of the four seasons, activity on the farm takes on different aspects and even branches out in new directions. Difficulties are experienced and overcome with the film depicting how a family heritage passes from one generation to another and within the year there comes a new birth and a new death.

During the winter activity is reduced to little more than keeping a perpetual fire under the skillet and to long evening conversations

among the family members—the grandfather and grandmother, their eldest son, Roch, and his wife and children, and the second son Henri, who is already thinking of La Fabrette as his future bride. They notice that the petrol lamp which they have always used is now becoming unsatisfactory. They think of installing electricity which can be shared with the neighbour, Fabre. Problems are discussed ; but Roch, the eldest, is reticent. Grandfather shows the family album to the children who, like all the children in the world, are compelled to do their homework.

Spring comes and life on the farm again becomes a round of activity. Since Fabre, the neighbour, has made up his mind to share the cost of electricity, it is installed. With the approach of summer winds and storms arise and these delay repair work until next year. Henri and La Fabrette contemplate their future. Then Henri has an accident and breaks his leg. Roch's wife has had a new baby.

With the approach of autumn, grandfather has grown very frail, his steps begin to totter. He summons the Notary so that his last will may be drafted. All the members of the family gather together, including the son-in-law and his wife, and two daughters who are nuns. The sharing out of the property takes place. According to tradition, the farm is the inheritance of Roch, the eldest son, and he must pay compensation to his younger brother, Henri. The sisters have renounced their share. Shortly after the making of the will grandfather passes peacefully away, is buried, and Henri and La Fabrette decide they will get married next spring.

Such is the outline of *Farrebique*, which, in general, can be compared in its realism and simplicity with the very wonderful and moving early paintings of Vincent van Gogh who, as a painter, conveyed his deep respect for the peasant and farmer. Every movement of life and work is explored by Rouquier with absolute integrity. Nothing is falsified.

We see the furrow turned up by the plough and the worm turned up with the earth ; the ashes raked out of the fireplace and the leaves raked up from the ground ; the movement of the sun and the lengthening of the shadows as evening falls. In the first reel a single day out of the year provides an introduction to this rooted rural life where at night the younger children do their homework, and before the family goes to bed, prayers are said.

With sleep there come the dreams of grandfather, Roch and his wife who is expecting a new baby. With these dreams the poetry and passion of Nature is most beautifully and powerfully introduced. The climax of the dream of Nature budding forth in all its abundance is the birth of the new baby.

The film has been extremely well analyzed by James Agee, the American writer who is responsible for the interesting documentary script of *The Quiet One*, a sociological film discussed further on.

Agee says that Rouquier 'realises that, scrupulously handled, the camera can do what nothing else in the world can do : can record unaltered reality ; and can be made also to perceive, record and communicate, in full unaltered power, the peculiar kinds of poetic vitality which blaze in every real thing and which are in great degree, inevitably and properly, lost to every other kind of artist except the camera artist'.

This point is extremely well illustrated by the visual impact of a worm turned up with the earth. No other art form, save that of the film, can possibly convey the movement of a worm in so memorable a manner that it will be noticed and remembered as part of the gigantic process of creation. Nor is there any other art form where one can be made aware of the rhythm of life and work, as illustrated by the two sequences of the bedding down of the cattle, one being at the end of the second reel and the repeating of this commonplace feature of farm life again appearing at the end of the fifth reel. In both sequences we have the bedding down of the cattle intercut with Roch's wife laying the supper table for the family.

In *Farrebique* there is the most sensitive blending of the importance of people and what they are doing ; this being a highly important element in the most outstanding examples of the documentary film. Reference can here be made to two classics of British documentary film-making—*Drifters* and *Nightmail*, both of which are discussed further on. They, too, maintain a balanced portraiture of people at work, showing that in life it is man himself who is important in the doing of any job of work.

The people who appear in *Farrebique* are in life the real owners of the farm and their neighbours. As Agee comments : Rouquier 'knows as well as any artist I can think of the power

and beauty there can be in absolute plainness : his record, for instance, of the differing faces of three men and two women as they stand in their home for night prayer'.

It is interesting to compare the documentary methods of Georges Rouquier and those of Robert Flaherty since both have based their films upon the real life of families, and both exhibit elements of the poet in their concept.

Rouquier introduces visual poetry through the inclusion of the dream sequence where he uses stop-shot photography to portray the growth of plants and flowers. Spring could hardly be conveyed with greater passion or a beauty that is more realistic. Here we see the blooming of a flower as the visual image of childbirth and again towards the end of the film there is a wonderful audio-visual effect of an axe sounding and a tree seen falling as the symbol of grandfather's death.

Flaherty, on the other hand, never included a symbolic passage of visual poetry in any of his films. He translated, as it were, the prose of daily life and work into what might be called cinematic blank verse.

Though the setting of *Farrebique* is so distinctively that of a French provincial rural area, the family itself has universality. It has been said repeatedly that the film is a marvellous means of communicating the life of the people of one area of the world to people in another area. *Farrebique* is a very fine example of the communicative powers of the cinema, and it is a major film because it is conceived with depths of insight and, above all, Rouquier presents the life he portrays with a respectful attitude both towards the farm family and the work they do so diligently.

Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Wages of Fear* (1953)

Directed by Clouzot in 1953, *Wages of Fear* is his best known film. It won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival the year it was completed and has since enjoyed a considerable success with mass audiences in Britain and elsewhere. This was the first foreign language film—the dialogue is in French, Italian and English—to receive a general release on a commercial cinema circuit in Britain after enjoying an outstanding artistic success at the Academy Cinema, London's oldest and most famous cinema for foreign

art films. In 1956 the film was shown commercially in some Indian cities.

As mentioned in the introductory note on French films, the production of films in France has perhaps shown greater diversity in style than in most other countries. A French writer speaking of the wide range of French films says that 'Luckily the French cinema has been able to keep that sense of anarchy which, at times, causes it to be condemned by some'. What the writer means is that it was possible in France to produce such unorthodox pictures as Jean Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet*, or Jean Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite* as well as films which have been labelled as 'licentious realism'. Some English critics have claimed that no directors have equalled the French in conveying the different aspects of love.

Since 1945 it has been contended that French directors have very frequently shown a profound understanding of the contemporary period. *Wages of Fear* could be said to illustrate this. The film also illustrates the statement that 'The Winds of realism which had blown away the swampy vapours of an out-of-date cinema were freely circulated through the works' of French directors. This picture demonstrates the influence of the post-war Italian 'neo-realist' film upon a French director.

Clouzot is also known for his later film *The Diabolical Ones*, a horrifying story of planned murder, and the now very famous *Mystery of Picasso*, a most interesting film showing very clearly how the great modern painter creates his paintings. Clouzot has been described as 'violent yet sensitive, impulsive yet rational, with a legendary stubbornness'. Much of his work, including *Wages of Fear*, shows that he 'likes to plunge his characters into a cruel, tragic, explosive or diabolic world'.

The setting of *Wages of Fear* is an unidentified Latin American country where a small desolate township is dominated by a foreign, presumably American, oil company. The hotel and bar is the centre to which a cosmopolitan group of dead-end characters flock in hope of finding work with the oil company. The ruthlessness of this company is effectively indicated very early in the film by the manner in which a jeep carelessly dashes through a puddle of water. As the film proceeds, four characters—a Frenchman, two Italians and a Slav—emerge into the foreground. The Frenchman

is attracted to the only woman—the servant-girl in the bar. A battle develops between the characters to be selected for the dangerous job of driving two lorries loaded with nitro-glycerine up a mountain road to the oil wells.

The four characters mentioned are selected and the main body of the film concerns this terrible journey. The Slav and the tubercular Italian meet their deaths when their lorry explodes, while the Frenchman—acted by Yves Meonton—is the only one to arrive alive, having been responsible for the death of his brutal and cowardly Italian companion. Having received his pay, he drives recklessly back along the road to find the girl and in his recklessness his lorry plunges over the abyss.

Of Clouzot it has been said that 'with perfect awareness he always goes almost past the limits of realism', but not quite. This statement is well illustrated by the most famous sequence in *Wages of Fear* where the lorry is forced to be backed on to the rotting trestle jutting out over the ravine. This sequence which is immensely powerful could very easily have tipped over into the comic. It has also been said of the film that it 'could perhaps be reduced to the dimensions of a thriller. But at times it seemed almost like a genuine tragedy'. This is evident in the horrific scene where the terrified Italian is pushed into the oil pond. In a thriller he would have been left to his horrible death.

Indian audiences, including film society audiences, have found *Wages of Fear* a film which 'is hard to take' because there is not a single character in it which can be called positive. Consequently some care should be taken by any group selecting to show this film. It should be remembered that this is a film to which the term 'mature' or 'adult' can be applied. The director makes no concessions either to idealism or to what is generally thought of as popular entertainment. Yet the picture has the ingredients of the gripping entertainment film. It is interesting to speculate how this same story and set of characters would have been handled in a Hollywood film with an eye to 'box-office'. There are a few now famous Hollywood films, for example, *The Informer*, directed by John Ford in his early days; *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, directed by John Huston, and Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* which have maintained the same kind of consistency

as *Wages of Fear* which, from the first shot to the last, preserves its mood.

Some critics have pointed out that despite all the more recent developments of widescreens or the dimensions of Cinerama, the conventional screen and the black and white film when imaginatively used can still create the most intense physiological effects. An example of this is the last sequence of *Wages of Fear* where the spectator is caught up in the movement of the lorry swerving recklessly down the mountain road.

II. SOVIET BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FILMS

Apart from Eisenstein's historical and biographical films, other Russian directors have made important pictures of this kind. The first of note was *Peter the Great* directed by Petrov in 1937. This film had richness of characterization and it convincingly reconstructed the period. In 1941 Vsevolod Pudovkin made the biographical film, *General Suvorov*, though this work lacked the force of Pudovkin's earlier films. A little later he directed a second film glorifying the memory of a Russian hero. This film, *Admiral Nahkimov*, encountered a certain amount of criticism and sections of it were remade.

During the 1940's several biographical films concerning the lives of famous musical composers were produced. Two in colour which deserve mention are *Mussorgsky* and *Glinka* on account of the effective sequences which conveyed the process of musical creation. However, both of these films were marred from the biographical point of view because certain psychological twists in the characters of the composers, or important personal episodes in their lives, were slurred over or altogether eliminated. These omissions were due to the fact that at this period of Socialist Realism there was an extreme stress laid upon what was called the 'positive' aspects of any hero.

Of Soviet biographical films, three pictures of the most lasting importance are those of the Maxim Gorky trilogy directed by Mark Donskoi—*Childhood of Maxim Gorky* (1938), *Out of the World* (1939) and *My Universities* (1940). The first and third of these films are in the Central Film Library.

The three films are based on the autobiography of the novelist and playwright, Maxim Gorky, who is most known to the world today for his novel, *Mother*, from which Vsevolod Pudovkin made his greatest film, and the play, *Lower Depths*, which was made into a film first by the French director, Jean Renoir, and later served as the base for two Japanese films, the last one being directed by Akira Kurosawa in 1957.

The Gorky biographical films are most beautifully and sensitively directed by Mark Donskoi. As Richard Griffith says of the trilogy, it 'dramatized the coming of political and humanitarian consciousness of the first great writer to be adopted by the Soviets as their own'.

In *Childhood of Maxim Gorky*, we see the sensitive boy who is destined to become a great writer, in his early youth surrounded by the vividly drawn characters of his relations—his marvellous expansive grandmother ; her quarrelsome sons, one poetically melancholy, the other mean. The entire family existence centres around a dye shop until they finally lose their money and property so that the mean uncle is reduced to begging, and even meets his now blind former employee whom he threw upon the streets and who is also a beggar.

This film is a quite wonderful reconstruction of Russia in the second half of the 19th century as seen in terms of Gorky's own family. The interesting gallery of family characters are superbly acted by artists long experienced in the theatre and here is an example of where the directorial talent and the talents of the actors are of equal importance. Few 'period' films are so exuberantly rich in atmosphere and action as the opening reels of this picture : the arrival of the Volga steamer, the family walking along the street of a town that seems so real, and the wonderful family gathering with its wild culmination where Maxim's uncles break into a furious fight with one another.

It is the small details in this film which build up a portraiture of a whole family—grandmother fat and even ugly, yet so delightfully sympathetic, breaking into a song and dance which is engagingly flirtatious. Or again the detail of the engaged uncle opening the spout of the samovar so that the hot water scalds his brother's hand. Or one can notice how there is the impression of people really working in the dye shop.

Behind the subtle visual observation, Donskoi has realized on the screen the literary qualities of the autobiography. Here is a most remarkably convincing picture of real life as it was in Tzarist Russia at the moment when revolutionary and reformist thought was being born. The young boy who acts Gorky conveys the feeling of a boy who will grow up to be a writer. Moreover, he bears a striking resemblance to Gorky. This also applies to the adult actor who portrays Maxim as a young man in *My Universities*.

In the final film of the trilogy, Gorky is a student without a formal university. His deep humanitarian and idealistic impulses are traced through several stages. He becomes involved with many contrasting types of people : some revolutionary, some, like the mean baker, on the side of repression. The film is a most powerful blending of the social envelope of a man's life, and inner processes through which he himself develops and seeks through his capacity to write to depict what goes on around him. At one point, Gorky in despair attempts to take his own life but then transcends his disillusion and goes forward with his life. 'Mr. Quixote', as he is called, matures and masters life, and the film ends with Gorky among the political exiles.

Seldom has there been a more thoroughly convincing portrayal on the screen of the evolution of a writer than in this film which so perceptively transfers a great writer's autobiography into dynamic film terms. The two films in the Central Film Library are among the most important of biographical films. At the same time, they serve as very interesting historical documents of a period as well as being outstanding works of film art which can be studied from several aspects—how actors can convincingly re-create personalities who actually lived ; how a sensitive director can reconstruct a period so that one feels while watching the films that one is seeing that period as it actually was.

It can be said that these films will live a long time because they are such an intelligent interpretation of a period and of the development of a very important literary figure.

III. THE CONTEMPORARY THEME IN JAPANESE CINEMA

Japan has been producing films since 1896, the year following the invention of cinematography. By the early 1920's film produc-

tion had become an important industry which was increasingly organized on very orderly and rational lines. Towards the end of the 1920's there were a greater number of feature films being produced in Japan each year than in the United States. Yet these films, which tended to follow world trends in cinematography, were hardly ever seen outside Japan although one or two articles on Japanese films were published in the international film journal, *Close-Up*.

It was not until 1951 that a Japanese film reached the world scene. The film which caused a considerable sensation was *Rashomon*, directed by Akira Kurosawa, who is now ranked as one of the world's leading directors. This film, which struck everybody as being essentially Japanese in spirit, won the top award at the Venice Film Festival and since then some of the most impressive films have come from Japan, now recognized as being one of the world's most important film-producing nations.

The film industry is dominated by five major companies, the largest of which—Sochiku—produces a hundred feature films a year. There are also a number of smaller independent companies. None of the five large companies specializes in what can be called 'prestige films', though almost all the international award-winning films have been produced by the major companies. Each company produces films representative of all levels of quality from trashy entertainment films modelled on Hollywood 'B' pictures all the way up to the films of great distinction directed by Kurosawa, the late Mizoguchi, Gosho and Kinoshita, each of these directors having developed a style of his own.

Being perhaps the most highly organized film industry in the world with the average film being completed in five weeks and major films in ten weeks, production has been divided into two main categories—the costume film, famous examples of which are Kurosawa's *Rashomon* and *Seven Samurai*; Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari* and *Gates of Hell* which was ranked higher abroad than in Japan, and the film with a contemporary theme such as Kurosawa's *Living (Doomed)*, Gosho's *Four Chimnies* and the two films—*Yukiwarisu* and *Children of Hiroshima* discussed here.

But there are also sub-categories known as 'mono'. These may be 'mother-mono', 'child-mono', or 'delinquent youth mono'. Within these sub-categories the range is from the trite tear-jerker to the most refined and profound interpretation. Horror

films and musical comedies which strictly imitate Hollywood are included. But there are few comedies. As a generalization it can be said that Japan has produced more convincing and memorable costume films than perhaps any other country. Very few of these have been spectacle films. Indeed, Japanese film talent does not appear to run to the spectacle film and it is at its most effective when it is dealing with the development of characters.

Japanese film production has certain unique features not to be found, or seldom to be found, in the production pattern of other nations. One is the notable preponderance of films with an inconclusive, sad or tragic ending. Some Japanese attribute this to the influence of Zen Buddhism, the philosophic premise of which is that despite the extreme prettiness of Japanese life, life itself is fundamentally tragic. Japanese audiences weep unabashed at the cinema. In no other country is the unhappy ending 'box office'.

Another unusual feature of Japanese film presentation is the pronounced featuring of the name of the well-known Japanese film directors. Their names are billed in larger characters than the names of the actors in their films. Toshiro Mifune, the leading actor in *Rashomon* is now very well-known; but in Akira Kurosawa's films, Kurosawa's name is given greater prominence than Mifune's. This director claims that he receives as many letters from members of the public, and particularly youth, as a film star might expect. Japanese film stars only receive large billing when their films are directed by lesser known directors. There is no country that has a similar practice. It is also said that it is the most intelligent and serious films which make the most money in Japan.

There is much that film directors in all countries can learn from the Japanese film which is on a very high technical level. In general it can be said that Japanese films, even the less important ones and those strictly designed for commercial entertainment, are produced with much care. The Japanese seek to make their films—major and minor—look visually convincing. This is particularly indicated by the care taken in building studio sets. Enormous observation goes into the carpenter's work (and it is traditional craftsmen who have been incorporated into the workings of Japanese studios). Film sets will correspond in size and detail to buildings which actually exist. Reconstruction of distant periods is done with

the greatest sense of authenticity. No less care is taken in regard to costumes and the make-up of actors. For example, you are not likely to see in a Japanese film a village girl wearing lipstick or dressed like an urban girl. It is such care that gives the Japanese film its atmosphere of actuality.

Japanese actors seem to adopt two quite different styles of acting for costume films and films of modern life. For the former, the acting is stylized and often exaggerated ; but for the contemporary scene the style of acting is extremely realistic. No other country has adopted this distinction of styles for films dealing with the past and present. In certain films the influence of both the traditional Kabuki and No theatres can be detected.

In the last few years each of the five major companies have developed their own widescreen methods. It can also be said that Japan, when it has used the colour film, has usually used it with great effect.

Yukiwarisu

Yukiwarisu is a film which is remembered by people who have seen it in India with a reaction of glowing enthusiasm. It has appealed to the heart, perhaps because the central character is a child finding his way in a set of rather unusual circumstances.

As in many Japanese films, there are very few characters in *Yukiwarisu*. A young husband and wife who live in a comfortable modern house ; a little boy who suddenly appears from nowhere with a letter declaring him to be the man's son, and the mother of this child.

The theme is both ancient and modern, ancient in that it has been a feature of Japanese literature and drama for a child to be suddenly introduced into a household and thereby cause drama and speculation as to the circumstances of its birth. (This theme is also part of Gosho's film *Four Chinnies*). The contemporary aspect of *Yukiwarisu* is, that as the story finally evolves, the birth of the boy was the result of the father's chance encounter with the boy's mother during an air-raid when both feared death.

The main body of the film concerns the reactions of the wife who, while her husband is away, is suddenly confronted with his child by another unknown woman. The boy is sent to the house,

enters it and then the drama of relationship begins. It is a relationship which goes through several phases from rejection to acceptance. The mother has sent the boy to his father because she is too poor to support him. The wife comes to accept the child through the explanation of the husband whose encounter with the girl during the air raid is shown in flash-back.

Yukiwarisu is an example of the carefully produced film dealing with the social and personal problems of modern people who are presented in a highly realistic manner. It calls for comparison with another film entitled *Mother* which deals with the stresses of a widow and her growing children's emotional problems. The excellent side of *Yukiwarisu* is its quiet and unobtrusive portrayal of the social environment of a young middle class couple who live in a nice little house. Effective dramatic use is made of the fact that the house is close to a railway line and that the approaching and retreating trains serve as a sound effect that sometimes symbolizes the emotional rise and fall of the action.

Children of Hiroshima

Japanese cinema includes a special category of films—not very great in number—which are story films based on a theme distilled directly from topical reality. Two such films are Kinoshita's *Shadow and Sunlight*, a daringly topical film made about a murder while the very long drawn out trial was still actually in progress. Another is *Children of Hiroshima*, an independently produced film financed by a group of school teachers who asked a number of film artists and technicians—one of them very well-known—to make a film dedicated to Hiroshima because they were people who had either been born in that city, or had lived in it before the first atom-bomb fell upon it in August 1945.

When *Children of Hiroshima* was released in England in 1955 it had a foreword spoken by Bertrand Russell, who was then speaking for nuclear disarmament in order to preserve the safety and survival of the human race.

The film is constructed in a series of episodes which are held together by the presence of the central character—a young school teacher who, surviving the first atom-bomb raid, has gone to work on another island. The film commences with the closing of her

school for the holidays and with her going back to Hiroshima for her holiday and to visit the grave of her parents. It is as she stands by their grave that she recalls the raid itself—a sequence discussed below. Walking away, she hears the voice of a beggar and, turning, recognizes the man as an employee of her father. He is now practically blind and, unable to support his grandson—the only survivor of his family—he has been compelled to put the boy into an orphanage. At the end of the film, this child is adopted by the teacher and taken to a new life after the old man has set fire to his hut and burned himself to death.

Between the first episode and the last, the teacher goes in search of other children she has known, and another young teacher who has since married but is barren from the radiation of the bomb. Each episode is self-contained—the young Roman Catholic girl patiently waiting for death from leukemia—the dread atomic disease ; the little boy rushing to the factory to find his mother and bring her to his dying father ; the young teacher now acting as the local midwife who is yet barren and the sturdy little boy who gladly takes his teacher home on the night that his raid-crippled sister is leaving the house to be married.

At first *Children of Hiroshima* appears a most unimpressive film—too much like life and too little like a work of art. But as the film develops its understatement and its naturalness begins to take hold of the spectator's emotions until, at the end, many people feel they have seen a most wonderful and deeply moving film.

When two extracts of the film—the bombing and the episode of the crippled girl on the night of her wedding—were shown to a variety of Indian audiences, there were some very interesting reactions. A teacher from Madhya Pradesh remarked that 'the Japanese family life and culture are akin to Indian family life. The brotherly and sisterly feelings are simply the same as those in India'.

A teacher from Saurashtra summed up what was the true intention behind the production of the film : 'It leaves a deep impression on the mind of the audience, because it shows how much destruction, tremendous loss of life and material war brings. As the picture involves children and as it shows the exact places and background, the film touches the heart.....The horrors of

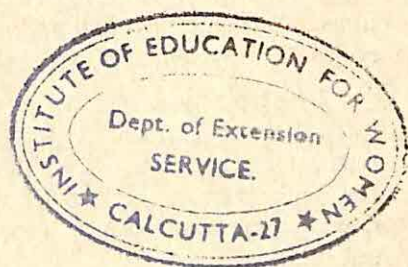
war make one strongly against war and strengthens one's belief in peace, because only peace can bring prosperity'.

Because of its great restraint and lack of bitterness, *Children of Hiroshima* has effected people the same way in all countries. It is, thus, one of the universal films which has significance for people in all countries. It is a film of moral force.

One reviewer in England claimed that the short sequence of the atom-bomb raid equalled in power the longer and far more complex sequence of the massacre of the towns-people on the Odessa Stairs in Eisenstein's *Potemkin*. No comment could be higher praise for the cinematic intensity of any sequence. Indeed, the atom-bomb sequence in *Children of Hiroshima* is an unforgettable sequence of images selected with the extreme economy which characterizes all the finest examples of Japanese art.

The sequence begins with the ticking of a clock and the announcement that the expected air raid is not going to take place. The sequence is introduced through the memory of the young teacher who runs out of her home to school on that fateful day. The images which her memory picks out are each like separate paintings—the baby; the children with the butterfly net; the face of the clock as the ticking grows louder and the hand jerks to 8.15 a.m. The appalling cloud of death explodes curling upwards to bring death and agony to flowers which curl and wither up. Scorched birds flutter on their broken wings and, finally, we see what the blast has done to human bodies—merely a handful—writhing in agony, twisting this way and that in the shreds of their garments. The sequence closes with the shot of a shadow upon the surviving steps of a bank—the shadow which had, on that day, been the figure of a man.

The power of *Children of Hiroshima* lies in its total lack of dramatic exaggeration. It is, as has been commented recently, the last word cinematically that can or should be said about the dropping of the atom-bomb and its aftermath.



3

THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

IN INDIA THE documentary film is of very great importance because in the widest sense it has an educative value which is more immediately evident than the cultural and artistic value of the feature film. Because of this educative importance it is extremely desirable for film-conscious people to learn as much about documentary films as possible in order to discriminate between those documentaries which touch the imagination of the spectator and those which, usually because of dullness, leave the spectator indifferent. Documentary film-making is a very special art when it is fully utilized ; but all-too-often people engaged in making documentary films grind them out rather as if they were an industrial product without distinctive individuality. This unimaginative approach is to be found in every country where documentary films are produced, and today documentary films are produced in considerable number in many countries, and there is hardly any nation in the world which is not using the documentary film to some extent for information purposes.

As stated earlier in this pamphlet, an exceptional documentary film is every bit as worthy of careful study as any feature film masterpiece. This is why film societies all over the world have

made a habit of showing outstanding documentaries and short films. Indeed, much film appreciation has been devoted to this style of film which, as a rule, brings reality to the screen.

The term 'documentary' covers a very great variety of films, but strictly educational films made for the purpose of teaching a particular subject are not included in the term. The proper term for such pictures is instructional. At the same time, certain documentary films can be used for instruction as well as general information.

John Grierson, probably the most influential of the people associated with the creation and development of the documentary film movement, first used the word 'documentary' in 1926 in a review of Robert Flaherty's picture *Moana*, the film made in Samoa which captured the inner meaning of the Samoan's traditional culture and the Samoan's emotional life.

The key to the term 'documentary', particularly, in the sense that it was originally used, is summed up on Grierson's declaration: 'We believe that the cinema's capacity for getting round, for observing and selecting from life itself, can be exploited in a new and vital art form. The studio film largely ignores this possibility of opening up the screen on the real world'. Flaherty is regarded as 'the father of the documentary film' because he brought the life of an Eskimo family to the screen in the picture *Nanook of the North* (1920-22), which is discussed in the pamphlet, 'Film Appreciation—The Art of Five Directors'.

Grierson continues with the credo of the British documentarists by saying: 'We believe that the original (or native) actor, and the original (or native) scene, are better guides to a screen interpretation of the modern world... We believe that the materials and stories thus taken from the raw can be finer (more real in the philosophic sense) than the acted articles. Spontaneous gesture has a special place on the screen.... Add to this that documentary can achieve an intimacy of knowledge and effect impossible to the shimsham mechanics of the studio and the lily-fingered interpretations of the metropolitan actor'.

The real person replaced the actor in documentaries, though subsequently there have been cases where professional actors have

appeared in documentary films in scenes which were enacted in studio settings. This has occurred in both American and Indian documentary films. But let us take the original definition and see what important films in the Central Film Library illustrate it.

One of the three classic documentaries which illustrate Grierson's declaration is his own silent film *Drifters*, which was first seen at the London Film Society in November, 1929, when it was shown on the same programme with Eisenstein's famous *Potemkin* which, though not a documentary, had in fact inspired Grierson to make his film of Scottish fishermen netting herrings in the North Sea, bringing back the catch and selling it. The rhythmic construction of Eisenstein's film is quite evident as an influence upon the construction of *Drifters* and an interesting programme can be made by showing the two films together for comparison.

The great importance of this cornerstone documentary is how it transferred to the screen the drama of the fishermen's lives without injecting fictionalized dramatic material. An epic documentary was constructed from the *real* scene of ships sailing out into the night, of men casting out nets and pulling in the catch, with the climax of the ships racing home to land the haul to the fish markets. This was the first film to uncover the beauty and power of such ordinary people as Scottish fishermen while they worked at their every-day occupation. It revealed the character and the individuality of the faces of men who had taken for granted and of whom cinema audiences had given no thought before.

At this formative period, the very essence of the documentary whether produced in France, Belgium, Holland, or Britain which, due to the crusading zeal of Grierson, assumed leadership, was to show people at work at their real jobs. It was found that if a man or woman was asked to perform before the motion-picture camera the tasks they did in life, they acted very effectively and without self-consciousness.

There was a conscious socio-political philosophy at the base of the documentary movement, and particularly in Britain where the documentary film attracted the liberal and socialist minded. In the broadest sense it was a humanitarian and socially conscious desire to inculcate through the cinema a knowledge of and respect for the people whose work keeps society going—the industrial

worker, the miner, the farmer, the school teacher—all those who work.

As Paul Rotha, one of the most serious film critics who turned to documentary film-making, said repeatedly in the 1930's, 'Real and creative thought must be about real things...Let the cinema attempt the dramatization of the living scene and the living theme, springing from the living present instead of from the synthetic fabrication of the studio. Let the cinema attempt film interpretations of modern problems and events, of things as they really are today, and by so doing, perform a definite function. Let the cinema recognize the existence of real men and women, real things and real issues, and by so doing offer to state, industry, commerce, to public and private organizations of all kinds, a method of communication and propaganda to project not just personal opinions but arguments for a world of common interest'.

This intent is clearly illustrated by the beautifully photographed, 20-minute film, *Industrial Britain* (1933), directed by Robert Flaherty whose work is discussed in detail in 'Film Appreciation—The Art of Five Directors'. *Industrial Britain* was produced by John Grierson for the then Empire Marketing Board, which Grierson has induced to become sponsor of a number of documentary films. This film, though never completed as originally conceived—it was to be longer and more all-embracing—is a 'tribute to the importance of individual craftsmanship even in a machine age'.

Step by step, the documentary advanced and attracted a multi-talented support. It became increasingly experimental in technique, and not only in England did it draw to itself outstanding musicians as in the case of *Night Mail* (1936), a film which is one of the most perfect examples of what was originally meant by the term 'documentary'. This film, which is discussed in detail further on, 'brings out the human meaning behind the nightly journey of the Postal Special from London to Glasgow. By intimate observation of the postal workers at their jobs, *Night Mail* 'pictures the dignity of ordinary labour, while the poetic ending celebrates the meaning of mail to the man in the street'. This film, which remains undated, demonstrates that the work of a public service can, in the right hands, become

the material for a lasting work of film art.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the term documentary covers a wide range of films which sharply differ in style. While the British movement with its social function became stylistically the most influential and also the most solidly grounded financially, a corresponding movement developed on the European continent, indeed, pre-dating the British. Broadly speaking, this movement developed outside the commercial film industries, showed influences derived both from Soviet films and the experimental films belonging to what was known as the 'avant-garde'. The credo behind the earliest of these films was: 'Man against Nature in distant lands marked the one purpose: Man against the Street, against the turmoil of the City, marked the other'.

In 1926 in Paris, and in 1927 in Berlin, two films very important in the history of the documentary, were made. The first was an 'Impressionistic study of commonplace life in Paris' with the camera 'chiefly concerned with the painterly values to be found in the ordinary, but there is more than a hint of the social implications of city life.' This film, *Rien que les heures*, was directed by the Brazilian, Alberto Cavalcanti, who later came to London and made a very great contribution to the British documentary film movement. Sequences of this film are included in the important four-part film, *Film and Reality*, which is the British Film Institute's history of documentary made by Cavalcanti himself.

The second film, which stirred the film conscience of Europe, was *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, directed by Walter Ruttmann. This is another film which was strongly influenced by Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, and in its turn 'was widely influential in suggesting to film-makers how the motifs of every-day life could be' used. Both films were silent and both were impressionistic. Ruttmann's film, *Berlin*, has had many descendants, one of the finest and most sensitive being the Swedish picture *Rhythm of a City*, directed by Arne Sucksdorff. A copy of this, and other Sucksdorff documentaries, are available from the Royal Swedish Embassy in New Delhi.

Also classified as 'documentary' and important in its development, is the 1928 film, *The Bridge*, directed by the Dutchman,

Joris Ivens, one of the major figures of the Continental documentary movement. This very unusual film, which at times becomes almost abstract in conception, is 'an acute visual analysis of the functional movements of a railway bridge near Rotterdam which is raised and lowered to permit the river traffic to pass'. For several years Ivens occupied himself with making films which visually examined in the most intense detail a particular process of work, for example, glass blowers making radio tubes.

His pre-occupation with processes of work led him to undertake the direction of three films recording the Dutch reclamation project of the Zuider Zee—the engineering project of the late 1920's and early 1930's involving the drainage of a vast area. During work on the three films, Ivens became ever—more acutely politically conscious—gradually moving towards a Communist view-point—so that the climax of the third film, *New Earth* (1934), becomes an outcry against the economic chaos which spread almost all around the world as a result of the U. S. stock market crash of 1929. Subsequently, Joris Ivens, one of the most talented of all documentary directors, made films in the Soviet Union, in China and in war-torn Spain, and in the Communist countries after Second World War. Because he sided with the Indonesians during their independence struggle he was for many years exiled from his native land. Despite the loss of Ivens, Holland is one of the countries which makes the finest of documentaries today, including those on art. The Central Film Library has the magnificent Dutch art film, *Van Gogh*.

Meanwhile in the 1930's, when the great development of the documentary film was taking place, Germany and France tended to be either very sharply experimentals or 'avant-garde', or concerned with unusual methods of constructing pictures with a directly instructional intent. For example, in France, Jean Painlevé with the collaboration of the major musical composer, Darius Milhaud, devoted himself to making a series of nature study films. The most famous of these, *The Sea Horse* (1934), vividly describes the life cycle of this marine creature. Painlevé has been held to be a great film artist though his fame rests upon these very specialized films. At the same time, Marcel de Hubsch developed a remarkable style for 3-minute films embracing gigantic subjects such as astro-

nomy. Perhaps the most noted de Hubsch film is *The Pacific Problem* (1934) made with animated maps to show the growth of Japanese aggression. This film was specifically made for teaching history, but it remains in my mind as one of the most vital films I have ever seen—unforgettable.

The Scandinavian countries, all of which came to the forefront of documentary film production; Czechoslovakia, and later the makers of short films in France, showed a great interest in producing anthropological films of peoples in far-off places, the Eskimos of East Greenland—or of the people of isolated parts of Europe. Even into the 1950's this trend has remained and supplied the films shown daily at the Musée de l'Homme (Museum of Mankind) in Paris. As early as the mid-1930's, some films of art were made, mainly at this time of architecture and sculpture. *Khajuraho* continues this line of development in a most impressive way.

In 1945, in Milan, Luchiano Emmer created a new kind of documentary which has since then been imitated in many countries. This was the film made from images which were originally either easel paintings or frescoes. His first film, *The Drama of Christ*, told the life of Christ through the frescoes of Giotto, the early Italian Renaissance painter. This film, and all of Emmer's subsequent art films, *reconceived* the original paintings in highly cinematic terms; this by the use of the camera to emphasize a single small area of the whole painting—a face, a hand, or two or three people only. Many people in different countries have followed Emmer's lead so that vast amount of the world's great art has now been adapted to film presentation. An Indian example of this style is the wonderful colour film based on paintings, *Radha and Krishna* (1959).

But by and large, the most important style of documentary was that which was experimented with in Britain where, through the persistent efforts of John Grierson and a little later of people like Paul Rotha, the documentary film gained a solid basis for constant production. The production company of Gaumont-British had set up a unit for the making of Nature Films under the direction of Mary Field, later famous for children's films. Then Grierson developed the Empire Marketing Board film unit.

Thereafter, he induced through his zeal, the General Post Office to set up what became the famous G. P. O. Film Unit. Grierson, as producer for G. P. O., attracted a group of highly talented young people who were dedicated to the documentary film and who produced a series of pictures which in time influenced the creation of production in many countries, including that of the unit in India which finally evolved into Films Division. G. P. O. was Government sponsorship and its main subjects had something to do with postal service and transport.

Very soon there was a great expansion of sponsorship so that we find the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board sponsoring the most poetic documentary ever made by a British director, *Song of Ceylon* (1934), the work of Basil Wright. The sponsors left Wright entirely free and there is no hint of commercial advertising in the film. With the formation of the Realist Film Unit, the British Gas Association financed a very daring film, *Housing Problems* (1935), which brought film journalism on a topical subject to the screen in a new way. Paul Rotha formed Strand Films which produced pictures on many subjects—ship-building, aviation and support for the then dying League of Nations. Every conceivable subject of public interest and importance was given interpretation in documentary films. For a considerable time these pictures—many of them wonderful examples of the film medium—were shown outside of the commercial cinemas, to groups and to film societies throughout Britain. Grierson founded a magazine, 'World Film News', to propagate mainly for the spread of the documentary film as an idea which could rouse a new civic sense. In 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, the film *North Sea*, produced by Alberto Cavalcanti for the G.P.O. Film Unit, and directed by Harry Watt, was the first of the British documentaries to prove a commercial success on cinema circuits. This film, a copy of which is in the Central Film Library, had very special qualities in that its human content was very rich and it had great warmth of feeling and conviction. It provided the documentary with a new point from which to grow during the subsequent years of war. During the war years, the most original and sensitive new British talent to emerge was that of Humphrey Jennings, who died all too soon. His masterpiece is *Diary for Timothy*, a copy of which is in the Library.

Strange as it may seem, the United States which had pioneered in so many aspects of film and brought into being the sound film and the colour film, lagged far behind other countries when it came to venturing on the documentary film. (Robert Flaherty, though an American by nationality, was completely outside of the framework of Hollywood ; made his films elsewhere ; and only in the last few years of his life he made films in America). From time to time there were sporadic attempts to venture, but no venture took root.

In 1955, Louis de Rochemont, under the influence of John Grierson, instigated with the sponsorship of 'Time' and 'Life' magazine, *The March of Times* series of topical subjects. Current events were depicted dramatically and drawn from all over the world. The series lasted for fifteen years and examples of its style are included in *Film and Reality*. Undoubtedly, this series exerted an influence on the war-time development of the documentary, which branched out in many directions and culminated in such important films as *Desert Victory* (1943), the British film, and the American *Why We Fight* series, where feature film directors like Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak turned to the documentary method. Most subsequent film journalism was also influenced by the *March of Times* technique.

Late in 1937, great excitement was stirred among British documentary film-makers, who declared that a new director, the American Pere Lorentz, had excelled themselves in dynamic documentary film-making. The two films which caused so much excitement in documentary circles were *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937). Both were U.S. Government sponsored films and they reflected the vitality of President Roosevelt's New Deal policies which were rehabilitating the depression-ridden states.

I remember the intense impact these two films made on me when I first saw them : they revealed an America which had never been hinted at in any feature film. They were a revelation of America's natural and human problems of devastation, and the will to transcend them. *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, with very impressive music by Virgil Thomson, dramatized in documentary form the social and economic history of the Great Plains which

had become a tragic dust bowl from erosion. This was an America far, far away from anything depicted by Hollywood, and it was profoundly moving.

The River, a copy of which is in the Central Film Library, is a far more ambitious film than the first, and a far more lyrical one in that, added to Virgil Thomson's music, the commentary is poetic. The subject—that of the wide and long Mississippi River—has a natural epic sweep and the film relates the panoramic story of the river basin; how vast industrial and agricultural expansion led to its exploitation and ruin, to devastation and floods from the reckless cutting down of trees; how the New Deal plan set about controlling the forces of nature and the recklessness of man. It was immediately evident that this film was a masterpiece of documentary filmmaking. It has remained a classic of the American cinema and, like Lorentz's first film, it gave an initial impetus to the further development of the American documentary. The young film-makers who worked with Lorentz—Ralph Steiner, Leo Hurwitz, Willard Van Dyke, the still photographer, Paul Strand, went on to make other notable films: *The City* (1939), *Lights Out in Europe* (1939) and *Forgotten Village*, laid in Mexico and with a scenario by John Steinbeck, the novelist.

The documentary film went to war and in the U. S., Britain, Soviet Union and Germany many directors, cameramen and technicians were incorporated into the war effort. Many different styles of film were produced in order to effect the thinking of different groups of spectators. There was an enormous expansion and much collaborative production. Perhaps the most ambitious film of all came at the end of the war, *The True Glory*, directed by Britain's Carol Reed and America's Garson Kanin with an international crew of combat cameramen. It records in the most vivid terms the final invasion of the Continent and the progress towards victory. Nine thousand feet long—and that is very long for a documentary—*The True Glory* portrays history as it was being made. As has been said of this film: 'The whole is a broad, eloquent canvas compressing and suggesting much more than the visible facts, and doing it in a manner possible only to the motion-picture; nothing else has so fully sustained or recorded the heroic story from D-Day to V-Day'.

Sixteen years separate *Drifters* from the *The True Glory*. The spirit evident in the former is still manifested, only in a more complex pattern, in the latter.

During these years of war, Grierson and artists trained by Grierson, went out to Canada, Australia and India and commenced film production units which from 1940 to date have ever-expanded and gradually taken on a character of their own, that is, a national character.

With the end of the war in 1945, virtually every country in Europe either went back to the production of peace time films, or else, if they had had no film industry, which was the case in some countries, they began to develop a documentary film production along with their feature film production. Sweden, Denmark and Holland have excelled. Some extremely interesting and varied films have been produced in France, including such delightful pictures as *The History of the Golden Fish*. Italy, which did not rank high on the world cinema scene in pre-war days, became very important through the 'neo-realist' film. Thus, Gigi Martello created the moving study of children playing in the ruins of Milan—*Children in the City* (1946). New personalities of much creative importance to the documentary appeared like Arne Sucksdorff in Sweden, whose long feature documentary, *Jungle Tale*, alternatively known as *The Flute and the Arrow* (1956), was made in a village of the Marias of Bastar.

Unesco and the United Nations have both, during the post-war years, produced numerous films. Many have been very well intentioned but have failed to achieve cinematic distinction. But *World without End* (1953), directed in Thailand by Basil Wright with another story shot in Mexico by Paul Rotha, is a memorable film in the manner in which it treats of medical and educational problems. It is a film which preserves much from the original concept of British documentary which for a time after the war drifted into an over-complacent rut. This decline of the pioneer movement soon gave rise to a counter movement within Britain—the so-called Free Cinema movement—which revitalized to a certain extent the British documentary movement with such new visions of film-making as indicated by *Tomorrow*, the story of two deaf mutes seeking a means to live and work, and the

exuberant and delightful portrait of youth, *Momma Don't Allow*, which captures the spirit of 'teenagers who love to jazz at Wood Green'. The film society audience in Delhi and Calcutta had a chance to see these films when Mr. James Quinn, the Director of the British Film Institute visited India.

1. SELECTED DOCUMENTARY FILM CLASSICS

Drifters (1929), Silent. 44 Minutes—British

Produced and directed by John Grierson for the then Empire Marketing Board, *Drifters*, coming at the very end of the silent film era, forms a dominant cornerstone in the subsequent development of the documentary film, and its maker emerged as the documentary movement's most powerful producer. Over a considerable number of years Grierson did more to assure a solid base for the development of the documentary than any other man. This is the only film he directed himself. His importance rests upon three things: his ability to convince sections of the British, and later the Canadian Government, to become regularly organized sponsors of documentaries; his effort to train a considerable number of outstanding people in film-making; and, lastly, his writings about the need for and theories behind the production of documentary films.

Grierson's credo can be summed up in these words of his: "Observe and analyse", "Know and build", "Out of research poetry comes" were the slogans we set before us. They suited the academic and the radical in our minds. They brought us more readily to the material of our times'.

A Scotsman with a preacher's passion, John Grierson turned to film criticism very early in his life, and in the 1920's he went to the United States. While he was there, Sergei Eisenstein's film *Potemkin* burst with great impact upon an unprepared world. (This film is treated in considerable detail in the pamphlet, 'Film Appreciation—The Art of Five Directors'). In December, 1926, *Potemkin* was released in New York and John Grierson was connected with the preparation of the American version. Having had an opportunity to analyse the film at close contact, Grierson was so inspired by its construction, method of editing the shots,

and by the use of real people in place of actors, that he determined to return to his native Scotland and make a film himself about the men who engaged in herring fishing.

It took three years before his film was completed and, as mentioned earlier, *Drifters* was first seen along with *Potemkin* at the London Film Society in November, 1929. Paul Rotha says of this film that at the time it was 'the only film produced in this country (Britain) that reveals any real evidence of construction, montage (editing) of material, or sense of cinema'. It was far in advance cinematically of any other film produced in Britain. From life itself an epic was created which to this day remains a major work of film art.

Grierson achieved a marvellous impression of the rhythm of the sea, the tempo of the fishermen at work hauling in the catch, while the ship's machinery is, as Rotha points out, 'been used with great power'.

Drifters can be interestingly presented in three different combinations of programmes : (i) as the first film of a programme devoted to British Documentary, the films to follow being *Song of Ceylon* and *Night Mail* ; or *North Sea* and *Diary for Timothy* ; (ii) or as the first film on a documentary programme, the films to follow being the American film, *The River* and the Australian, *Back of Beyond* ; or the Unesco picture, *World Without End*, and the Indian picture, *The story of Dr. Karve* or (iii) in conjunction with Sergei Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, which admittedly influenced its particular structure.

Song of Ceylon (1934-35) Sound. 40 Minutes—British

Produced by John Grierson, with direction and scenario by Basil Wright, and music by Walter Leigh, *Song of Ceylon* remains to this day as one of the most important examples of what is called cinematic poetry, or the poetry of the cinema. Much is added to the great beauty of the images by the exceptionally sensitive commentary based in large measure upon ancient Buddhist texts and marvellously spoken by the late Lionel Wendt, one of the most imaginative spirits of Ceylon who was Wright's collaborator. The music assembled by the late Walter Leigh is also ideally suited to the general concept of the film which adopts the Western classical musical form of the four-movement symphony.

The first 'movement' is in essence 'in the footsteps of Buddha'; the second develops the theme of Buddhism in the life of the island; the third concentrates upon dancing, growing out and in spiritual opposition to the Devil Dances; the fourth movement is an impressionistic, and wonderful audio-visual climax of industry and commerce invading Ceylon. It is the audio-visual aspects of *Song of Ceylon* which have caused it to become a classic. Let me quote in detail the description of one sequence, the opening one:

'A procession is seen climbing a mountain path, to take part in a Buddhist ritual. The sense of growing anticipation is intensified by the voices of the climbers, by the atmospheric music, by the sight of the older people resting on the way, while a reader prepares them for worship and the voice we hear (that of Lionel Wendt which has an exceptionally true and reverent cadence, without any affectation), recites in English the beautiful words of praise of the Buddha. When dawn comes, we are high up in the mountain and the people are singing. The singing strengthens in feeling, and the impression of a rising excitement increases. The great image of the Buddha is constantly seen, and a series of bell-notes begins to echo down the mountain-side with rising intensity. The bells combine into varied music of their own, and a bird is startled into flight over the water, the camera following it until the images of the bird, the Buddha, the mountain-side, the water and the trees are combined together, and the resonance of the rising bell-notes sounded at intervals culminates in a feeling of ecstasy and worship.'

Song of Ceylon ranks among the most sensitively made documentaries, and it reveals the visual poetry and deep emotion that can be drawn forth from reality if a director, as Basil Wright was, is left on his own by his sponsors and allowed to follow the dictates of his own response to subjects and his inspiration. By *not* directing Wright how to approach the subject, nor restricting him in any way, the tea interests who sponsored the film had for their investment a masterpiece which has remained an alive work of film art for twenty-seven years. It is the finest film, apart from *Night Mail*, created by Basil Wright.

Wright, in 1929, was one of a number of young men who later became important directors who attended Sergei Eisenstein's

lectures for the London Film Society. The film theories of Eisenstein, as well as his films, made a profound impression on Basil Wright, who very soon joined the then Empire Marketing Board's film unit, and a little later joined the G.P.O. Film Unit and worked under the guidance of Grierson.

Speaking about *Song of Ceylon* many years later and about the work of Eisenstein, on British Broadcasting Corporation programme, Wright claimed that his film was an application of certain of Eisenstein's theories of montage—editing—and he cited as examples the way he had photographed the passing elephants and edited many shots in the film.

Since there are three films directed by Basil Wright in the Central Film Library—*Song of Ceylon* (1934-35), *Night Mail* (1936) and the Thailand section of the two-part Unesco film, *World Without End* (1953) an interesting programme can be made with these for the study of Wright's work. For those who wish to see for themselves the influence of Eisenstein, *Potemkin*, *Drifters* and *Song of Ceylon* would make an extremely interesting and mature film appreciation programme.

Night Mail (1936) Sound. 25 Minutes—British

Together with *Song of Ceylon*, *Night Mail* represents the most creative side of the British documentary film movement as it developed in the 1930's. Again produced by John Grierson for the G.P.O. Film Unit, an outstanding team of artists worked on the film: Harry Watt and Basil Wright wrote the scenario and directed the film, while the talented and experienced Brazilian director, Alberto Cavalcanti (mentioned in the introduction to this section on documentary films), constantly advised and particularly in relation to the use of sound. The music was composed by the now famous Benjamin Britten and the words and verses used in the commentary—one entirely unique in concept for the period—were written by the well-known poet W. H. Auden.

By the time *Night Mail* went into production, the British documentalists at their best had become extremely perceptive as to how to effectively use people to portray themselves at work on the job. This is most vividly brought home in this film where

the mail-sorters chit-chat. Subtract this element of intimacy and *Night Mail* could well have become either a commonplace film or an over 'arty' picture. The chit-chat and such images as the two train mailmen waiting to toss out a bag of letters—one of them counting so naturally on his fingers to tick off the seconds—gives this extremely carefully constructed film its vibrating atmosphere of real life. It is full of very small details which reveal the meaning of Grierson's words quoted under discussion of the film *Drifters*: 'Observe and analyse' and 'Out of research poetry comes'.

Night Mail, as mentioned in the introduction, traces the journey of the Postal Special from London to Glasgow. It is a perfect example of the use of reality for creative documentary film-making. In many respects, the picture is experimental, especially, in regard to its audio-visual effects, which still remain among the most interesting achieved within the scope of the British documentary movement.

The sound track, which is the outstanding feature of the film, is composed of several elements: music specially composed, straight prose commentary of a descriptive kind and, towards the end, a rhythmic poetry as the train approaches the Scottish border and rushes towards its final destination. Very effectively interspersed are the idiomatic comments of the sorters of the letters, and other railway employees. Without these snatches of conversation the cameo portraits of the men at work would not be one-half as effective. There are also introduced some realistic sound effects. These are used with great tonal discretion, as for instance, the sharp clicking sound when a mailbag is mechanically picked up off a hook as the train rushes by or the thud of a bag ejected from the train into a net hung out at a collection point.

Throughout the twenty-five minutes of the film there is much variation in tempo, a very wide range of sound and the complete process of the work portrayed. Yet from the beginning to the end there is the utmost consistency maintained so far as the camera work is concerned. Visually, *Night Mail* commences in the murky, smoky darkness of the London station. The camera moves into the train on its run to crew. Again platforms are seen

in night time. Then the camera again enters the train. But as the journey continues, the camera also observes the outside world along the railway tracks. We realize the rural surroundings through the image of the horse. The further north the train goes the nearer we come to the dawn, and with the dawn comes the racing sheep dog and the rhythmic verses, and the wild beauty of Scotland, and at last the greatest city of the north where men await their letters. The British have never produced a more deeply true document about themselves than this. This film embodies a profound national feeling, but a feeling where all chauvinism is absent.

Night Mail is one of the most important documentary film classics which all students of cinema and film appreciation should see. It is a film where all the elements contributing to the whole can be very clearly seen and analysed. It demonstrates that any subject can be used for the base of a really interesting film provided knowledge and imagination are used creatively. It is very evident that the subject of *Night Mail* could very easily have been treated in a flat factual manner and emerged as no more than a record. Had a straight commentary alone been used there would have been no lifting up of this film from the factual to the creative.

There is no doubt that the memorable cinematic qualities of *Night Mail* can be explained by the fact that the highly talented team who created it were inspired by the idea of the documentary film being a field of film production which could produce works of art from the material of real life that all of them sought an intimate knowledge of the subject before they went to work.

When this film was shown at a seminar on film appreciation at Agra University Film Club in 1960, it was agreed by many of the members that while this film portrays a typical group of British workers in the 1930's, twenty-five years later the film remains universally true of people at work, and railway workers and mail train workers in particular.

The River (1937). 31 Minutes—American

Mention is made of *The River* in the introduction to this section. While it was an absolutely new departure so far as the

American film was concerned, Pere Lorentz's remarkable picture can be regarded as something of a creative parallel with *Night Mail*, even though the subject—the Mississippi River—is of greater magnitude than the British film. Like Paul Rotha in Britain, Lorentz had been a film critic who made his first film, *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, without previous experience in film-making. He had persuaded the New Deal administration of President Roosevelt to venture on the formation of the U. S. Film Service. *The River* was produced for the Farm Security Administration.

Like *Night Mail*, Lorentz's film includes a poetic commentary. In character it recalls the poetry of the great American poet, Walt Whitman, and it was the effect of this unusual commentary which caused so much attention to be given to the film as soon as it was seen. Also like *Night Mail*, the music of a major composer—Virgil Thomson—made a great contribution to the audio-visual importance of the film.

There is no doubt that *The River* is a very wonderful landmark in the development of the documentary film. Lorentz revealed great talent and originality. But his is a talent which was never permitted to fully develop. His third film, even more powerful possibly than his first two—*The Fight for Life*—so outraged certain Congressmen (it dealt with a maternity centre in Chicago) that support for Lorentz was stopped. Later he went to Unesco, but has since never succeeded in creating an outstanding film. He is an example of a man who managed to make three very important films but whose talent was damaged by lack of appreciative sponsorship.

North Sea (1938). 35 Minuets—British

This film, produced for the G. P. O. Film Unit by Alberto Cavalcanti, is also mentioned in the introduction. It was directed by Harry Watt, co-director with Basil Wright of *Night Mail*. It can be regarded as a climax to the development of the British documentary film for a period of a decade—from *Drifters* to *North Sea*. It was completed almost on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War. Rotha claims that 'Watt has shown more understanding of the need for human qualities in documentary than any other British director'. *North Sea*, as mentioned earlier,

made an impact on theatre audiences. Cavalcanti, its producer, had had experience in France of directing story films. (He later returned to feature film production in England). Watt was the documentary director whose work impressed feature film producers and after *North Sea*, Harry Watt left documentary films and went to work for Michael Balcon, the producer who contributed a series of feature films with a very special and unique British atmosphere.

One of Watt's transitional films is *Target for Tonight* (1941), the first important film of the Second World War. This film was a notable success in the United States where it was popular in theatres. Subsequently, its director went to Australia where he directed the first feature film in an Australian setting—*The Overlanders*—the picture analysed as the second example in the film appreciation series, *The Critic and the Film*.

An interesting study for any advanced group concerned with film appreciation would be to study the development of Harry Watt, commencing with *Night Mail*, following with *North Sea* and ending the first session with the 5-reel *Target for Tonight* (available from the British Information Services in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras). A second session could be devoted to *The Overlanders* (available through the Australian High Commission in Delhi) and the Central Film Library's study film of this picture.

Desert Victory (1943). 60 Minutes—British

David MacDonald and the R. A. F. Film Production Unit's long film, *Desert Victory*, represents the British technique of documentary as it was perfected for wartime use. This adaptation of a technique came about earlier than the American due to earlier involvement in the war. This was an orientation film for the general public and it is a lucid exposition of one of the most crucial combined—military, naval and air force actions of the whole war—that of the Eighth Army driving Germany's Afrika Korps from El Alamein to Tripoli, an action covering 1400 miles. The Allied troops were composed of British, Indian, Australian and South African units. In retrospect, the weakness of the film is a certain ungenerousness in attitude in that vast tribute is paid to the British forces' endeavour, but extremely little mention is made of the other forces taking part. They are barely shown.

The film, however, is interesting in that it is a most comprehensive visual exposition of a vast and complex military action which is now part of history. It clearly shows the inter-relationship in modern warfare of the organizing of industry by the home-front and the co-ordination of all the forces actually engaged in fighting. Certain phrases in the running commentary are very vivid as, for example, the description of the action being planned as 'the breaking down of a wall with a crowbar ; then you enlarge the hole'.

The picture is composed of documentary material shot throughout the actual action ; diagrams to explain the battle plan itself and some highly effective newsreel material evidently captured, such as the shots of Field Marshal Rommel in Berlin with Hitler and Goebbels. The gigantic action is at moments endowed with a certain personalized element and not only in the recurrent shots of Montgomery and Churchill ; but in the suddenly meaningful shots edited with the words that this was the action of a citizen's army with the plan going from general to private-soldier so that everyone was 'in the know'. Or the sequence of the soldiers writing their letters home. At this juncture the music becomes most effective suggesting an underlying tenderness ; whereas where music is used elsewhere in the film, particularly during the first half, it is highly effective in lending a martial feeling without using any of the obviously known military tunes.

The photography is excellent and there are some beautiful shots at night in silhouette. From a purely cinematic point of view probably the most effective and memorable sequence in the film is that which shows the men waiting for battle and training in physical fitness.

One of the ways to present this film today (other than as an exceptional example of a film of historical interest, or for armed forces personnel) is to present it together with the very different type of war film *Diary for Timothy*, one of the masterpieces of Humphrey Jennings.

World of Plenty (1943)—British

Produced and directed for the Ministry of Information by Paul Rotha, the famous critic, the script for *World of Plenty* was

written by the well-known author, Eric Knight. This film, which though made during the war looked towards the peace, is of extreme importance in the history of the documentary film. Its subject is the vital one of food and the production of food all over the world.

To a certain extent this film can be called a cinematic debate with the authoritative voice (commentator), or the 'voice of God', being questioned by another voice representing the audience. The man-in-the-street is also interjected visually by the character of an ordinary housewife who has the daily problem of feeding the family.

World of Plenty, made at a moment when large areas of the world were existing under conditions of the strictest food rationing, was intended to instruct as to the problem of nutrition, and it stresses the paradox that while the world is full of food, side by side there is also a vast amount of starvation.

From a technical point of view, this film brought a fresh approach and it was constructed in a very ingenious way. There are sequences covering the growing and consumption of food all over the world. To have shot this material during war would have been impossible. Moreover, to have shot this material in time of peace would have cost a very great deal. Rotha, who before the war had experimented with how to produce the greatest number of films, compiled almost the whole of *World of Plenty* from material shot by different directors for films already made, and from films made in various countries. (During the making of *World of Plenty*, Rotha asked me if I could send him any footage related to food shot by Eisenstein for the unfinished film, *Que Viva Mexico* which I fashioned into the film, *Time in the Sun*, a film mentioned in 'Film Appreciation—The Art of Five Directors').

Paul Rotha, writing in his noted book, *The Film Till Now*, cites the Prologue of *World of Plenty* as an example of this sentence regarding the construction of a film scene: 'It is perfectly possible for the action of a scene to be taken by the camera in several different places remote from one another, but when the scene is filmically composed, the various places will appear to be one and the same.'

Writing in 'The Film Since Then', an additional section to the revised edition of 'The Film Till Now', Richard Griffith, curator of the New York Museum of Modern Art Film Library, says : 'Not only was *World of Plenty* a highly personal film : it was also the intimate product of the impact of two minds upon each other during the course of a long friendship. Between them, the late Eric Knight and Rotha developed a new form in this pioneering film. It reflected all the things they held in common ; learned knowledge of the history of the medium (film), deep and instinctive feeling for its capacities and, where subject was concerned, a high anger against the folly and waste of heedless exploitation. It was the anger which gave a dimension to *World of Plenty* beyond that of Capra's *Why We Fight* series (the American documentary wartime series)...Most films hardly even try any more to speak to the audience in a voice it can believe. *World of Plenty* did it.'

This is, of course, the basic purpose of documentary as declared in the words of Grierson quoted at the very beginning of this section devoted to the documentary film.

The Quiet one (1947)—American

In the second half of the 1930's a highly distinctive style of documentary film appeared in the United States and subsequently made a considerable impression on film makers in other countries. Two particular films, *The Plow That Broke the Plain* and *The River*, both directed by Pere Lorenz and financed by the U. S. Government, were impressive on account of their forceful handling of urgent national problems—the erosion of the land which caused the uprooting of families and called for urgent measures. The latter film had a commentary in verse which greatly added to its effect. People who saw these films at the time they were made were overwhelmingly conscious of seeing aspects of America that had never before been put on the screen.

But the documentary film did not enjoy as stable financial backing in the United States as it did in England prior to the Second World War. Only with the outbreak of war was there an extensive development of the documentary and when it commenced to develop it was more closely connected with the commercial studio story film than the documentary was in other countries.

However, since 1945 some very interesting experiments in the documentary film have been made in the United States. One such picture is *The Quiet One*.

Produced by the late Joseph Burstyn and Janice Loeb and directed by Sidney Mayers from a script written by James Agee, *The Quiet One* is a notable cinematic presentation of a socio-psychological problem. The theme can be regarded as universal.

The film re-creates the psychiatric case history of the ten year old Negro boy, Donald Peters (beautifully enacted by Donald Thomson), who has been placed in the Wiltwyck school for maladjusted boys. As the film unfolds it becomes evident that such a subject can be treated in a highly satisfactory manner in the cinema provided that the artists making the film have sensitivity and imagination. Comparison can be made between this sensitive and sympathetic film and the no less perceptive British film, *Thursday's Children*, made by the now famous Lindsay Anderson about the problem of teaching deaf children.

The commentator in *The Quiet One* is the psychiatrist who gradually brings to light the story of Donald, the little boy who coming to the school made no friends, hardly ever smiled, seldom spoke and never received a letter. As the commentator says, he unearthed the boy's story and the cause of his emotional disturbance 'in bits and pieces.'

It emerges that Donald was an unwanted child brought up by a strict grandmother who did her duty by him but did not love him. Her harshness is somehow most effectively conveyed by the style of prim that she constantly wears. As a result of his grandmother's treatment the boy becomes completely closed-up and can only express himself in outbursts of violence. His mother whom he loves has married a second time and has a new baby. She, too, is uninterested in Donald who is thus driven from being unwanted into the anti-social pattern which leads to his being placed in the Wiltwyck School. After some time a new counsellor—Clarence—comes there who begins to love Donald. Unused to love—being loved or loving—the boy becomes violently jealous of Clarence. A crisis develops in Donald and he runs away from the school. He walks along the railway tracks ; but when he actually

faces the danger of death from a train, he saves himself and in doing so comes to accept that he has no home of his own.

Throughout the development of the action, which of necessity has to be circuitous in order to reveal the inner psychological problems of Donald, the film retains great integrity of style. One never feels that the enactment of the characters becomes dramatized but that there is a preservation of the genuine documentary approach. We see the streets of Harlem—the Negro section of New York—and the people as they really are. The dialogue between Donald's mother and her new husband is most tellingly exact as it would be in life. Very effective use is made of sound in the sequence where Donald is left to baby-sit with the new child. As his emotions intensify, jangling sounds accompany his outburst of emotion when he smears his mother's mirror and her new baby howls and howls. Such audio-visual effects are extremely effective in conveying Donald's inner and outward state. One sees (and hears) the inner tensions mounting so that Donald goes out and wrecks violence.

This particular scene, portraying a psychological state, would be just as effective if it were conceived within the framework of a dramatic story film.

It can be pointed out that *The Quiet One* is a full-length documentary feature film and as such it could very well be presented as one of four such film programmes, the other three being Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story*, Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique*, and Rajbans Khanna's *Gotama the Buddha*. A fifth programme could be devoted to the next film discussed.

Back of Beyond (1954)—Australian

Film production of a documentary nature commenced to develop in Australia after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. British documentary director who had worked under John Grierson, including Harry Watt, discussed earlier in this section, were among those to go to Australia. Very naturally, these people trained Australian technicians and directors.

In the field of wholly Australian-made documentaries, *Back of Beyond* stands as a landmark in that it is an expression of an

entirely Australian concept of documentary and captures the atmosphere of a 'new' country in much the same vital way as Pere Lorentz, nearly twenty years earlier, captured the spirit of an America which had not been expressed on the screen before. *The River* and *Back of Beyond*, though so utterly different in style, are to a great extent parallel films.

Back of Beyond was directed by John Heyer, who had previously made several shorter and less important pictures. During the early stages of scripting this film, Heyer had the creative assistance and inspiration of Sidney Nolan, Australia's most striking and imaginative painter who has now become internationally known. Nolan and Heyer travelled into the central heart of Australia with Nolan making sketches on the journey. Many of these sketches served later for the subject and composition of shots in Heyer's film. (This is the only instance covered in these two film appreciation pamphlets where a film discussed included the collaboration of a film director and a painter). It is possible that the presence of Nolan at the outset has something to do with the very unique and sometimes symbolic-like imagery that appears in the finished film. (The subsequent painting of Sidney Nolan was immensely affected by his journey with Heyer).

The picture relates the story of the periodic journey of the mail carrier who drives his lorry some three hundred miles into the burning and desolate heart of Central Australia where only scattered European families live along with a sparse population of aboriginal people. The mail carrier, linking up this outpost with the outside world, and his journey serves as the continuity link for several episodes which indicate the kind of life these people live. There is both grimness and humour: the shots of bleached bones of cattle dead from drought, or those of carcasses festooning trees which were caught in a terrible flood. In contrast the amusing scene of the mail driver dancing with the seamstress' dummy which he has to deliver. And following the urgent voice of the sick woman over the radio seeking to be linked up with a doctor hundreds of miles away. It is a film of ordinary, very ordinary people, living in a land which looks like a lost world. It is a very human film.

Back of Beyond has an interesting style. One is tempted to

say that this style is essentially Australian. Certainly the attitude expressed in this film portrays the Australian one and it does not seem to be an imitation of the documentary films of any other country.

Additional Documentaries

The nine documentaries discussed in detail are the most important held by the Central Film Library. But there are others which merit mention as being very fine or interesting examples and which are suitable for film appreciation audiences :

Diary for Timothy, Humphrey Jennings's very important film, and mentioned several times.

Thursday's Children, Lindsay Anderson's exceptional film which is a 'must' for those interested in an artistic presentation of an important educational subject.

Kingdom of the Waters, a full-length feature documentary made in Hungary about the life of birds. This is a film which ran in London, at a theatre, as a second feature film, and was the first of an interesting series.

The Tragic Pursuit of Perfection, a French film with an English commentary telling the story of the inventions and life of the greatest of Italian Renaissance figures—the many-sided Leonardo da Vinci.

World Without End, the Unesco produced film directed by Basil Wright in Thailand and Paul Rotha in Mexico.

Industrial Britain, Robert Flaherty's 1933 film, mentioned in the introduction to this section. This film can be combined (1) with any of Flaherty's full-length feature films discussed in 'Five Directors' ; (2) shown on any programme tracing the development of documentary ; or (3) used to illustrate extremely fine camera work.

Mention has been made several times of the 4-part history of documentary, *Film and Reality*. This is a film of the greatest interest for those who wish to study all the different styles of documentary, and also those feature films which have included many documentary elements. An enormous range of cinema is covered

in this film. It enables people to see the development of documentary in its international perspective.

Indian Documentaries

When a government department, in this case Films Division, is faced with producing a number of pictures yearly, each for a different Ministry, or its own Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, it is beyond the realm of the possible that the majority of films thus produced can be more than average. In a number of cases each year Films Division commissions pictures to be made by approved private film producing units. It will be a cause for wonder if the average film be anything more than competent, considering that there is almost bound to be a fair amount of chopping and changing and a generous use of the blue pencil by the sponsoring departments. The authorities, whether in India or elsewhere, are almost bound to be something of a menace so far as the creative film-maker is concerned, since the person in charge of films in any department may either want to include in a film something that is virtually impossible cinematically or else confiningly prosaic. Alternatively the film-maker may follow a too general line when the sponsor is seeking something very precise.

The creative problems of the Indian documentary appear to be two-fold and to a great extent peculiar to India.

First, that documentary production in India having commenced under the guidance of people trained in British documentary (with subsequent personnel trained to some extent in Canada and the United States), the struggle for many Indian directors, scriptwriters and cameramen is how to evolve an *Indian* style rather than one echoing the Anglo-Saxon-cum-American style which is not suited to expressing the entirely different culture pattern of the Indian sub-continent.

Second, India being in the very literal sense a sub-continent with fourteen official languages, its film-makers are perforce called upon to communicate with one another, and the people they work with most generally, in Hindi or English, languages which are not spoken by all. (The exception to this rule is where there is a State film unit such as in West Bengal or Orissa where the pictures are made in the language of the particular State).

India's language problem accounts for certain general characteristics in her documentary films : for example, the lack of small cameo characters dotted through films like *Night Mail* or *Back of Beyond*. It is the exception rather than the rule in Indian documentaries to have the man on the job making his own idiomatic comment from the screen.

Such a situation is almost unique to India where most documentary scripts and commentaries are written in English and subsequently translated into Hindi and some twelve other languages. It is frankly admitted by numerous directors and scriptwriters that because of the language situation which is so complex that they feel as foreigners when they make a film in some part of the country where they do not speak the language.

This explains the lack of linguistically intimate touches which have been so effectively used in the documentary films of many other countries. It may also explain in part that most Indian documentaries have conspicuously more commentary than in most foreign documentaries being produced today. The impression of intimacy, if it is to be created on the audio side, has to be devised by some other means than the idiomatic phrase coming from the man, or woman, shown on the screen ; that is, until scriptwriters and directors are bold enough to break through the language barrier, or a policy is adopted which enables people to work mainly on subjects where they are masters of the local language.

One film which achieved a large measure of intimacy without the use of the 'live phrase' is the 1954 National Award documentary, *Spirit of the Loom*. Here the commentary purported to be thoughts of a weaver. The personal slant of the words endowed this film with a feeling of warmth. Another picture—quite a modest one produced for the World Health Organization and which has the charm of intimacy is *It Happened in Our Village*, a film about a midwife improving her methods of work.

Despite the very real difficulties faced in producing films for a vast country, and at the same time evolving a distinctive national style, the Central Film Library has a number of Indian documentaries which are interesting and suitable for inclusion in

Film Society programmes. For example, *India and the U.N.O.*, which is of value for appreciating recent historical trends ; *Good Manners*, an amusing film showing how not to behave ; or *Children of God*, a sensitively produced film about untouchability for those who desire to show an important social subject.

There are also a group of Indian documentary films which are of specific interest for film appreciation because each of them has some special film interest, and each of these films, different as they are, seem to exhibit a quality in film-making which can be called essentially Indian in spirit. Four films are selected as outstanding examples of the Indian documentary films—*Khajuraho* (1956), *Lokmanya Tilak* (1957), *The Story of Dr. Karve* (1958) and *Mayurakshi Dam* (1959).

Khajuraho is the most cinematic, the best integrated and the most interesting film from an audio-visual point of view to have been made on an art and archaeological subject in India. It takes five of the Khajuraho temples and examines them with great visual perceptiveness. The conception of *Khajuraho* excels in cinematic qualities other Indian films on architecture and sculpture in that it is freer and more poetic. Imagination has been allowed to play with the words of the commentary so that the words are more than descriptive. They create a mood and touch the imagination of the spectator in relation to the imagery which is most sensitively selected and extremely well edited. There is both boldness and discretion in the film. No less perfectly balanced with the images and the words is the musical score. Notice should be taken of how the music reaches a crescendo to counterpoint the movements of the camera. Other countries have made films about great architectural edifices but none have exceeded *Khajuraho* for cinematic perfection.

Lokmanya Tilak (1957), was made by Vishram Bedekar, a Maharashtrian like his subject. The life of this remarkable pioneer of the Indian Independence movement is portrayed through the use of photographs, objects connected with Tilak and a selection of images used symbolically ; for example, the opening and closing of prison doors to signify Tilak's arrests and release. One of the most vivid and moving of these symbolic images is a pair of handcuffs casting a shadow on a wall. The man Tilak

is never shown through the use of an actor impersonating him. His presence in a scene is symbolized by the back of a man representing him; the feet, the arm and a hand carrying a stick. The result of this technique is a film which is compelling visually.

My first impression when I saw the Tilak film was that Bedekar was drawing upon the earliest traditions of Buddhist art where Gotama after His entrance into the state of Enlightenment was never shown as a realistic figure but by the symbol of the Bo Tree or the Wheel of the Law. Later when I asked Bedekar to explain his choice of style relying upon images used in a symbolic manner (I found it extremely dynamic cinematically), he said he 'felt it to be a style which is Indian in spirit'. His choice appears to be very satisfying artistically because it would be extremely difficult to find an actor, or even a non-professional person to appear as Tilak, particularly because the memory of the living man is still very clear in the minds of people. *Lokmanya Tilak* is a most interesting and filmically unusual biographical picture.

The Story of Dr. Karve (1958), also a biographical film, is in stylistic contrast to the Tilak film in that the living Dr. Karve, now more than a hundred years old,* appears at the beginning and end of the picture recording his life of service to the cause of easing the widows' plight and advancing the education of women. The most striking thing about the film is the very excellent reconstruction of certain episodes taking place fifty or seventy years ago. These scenes seem to be endowed with such sincere authenticity that while they are enacted they maintain the documentary spirit. This is something which is not at all easy to achieve.

Mayurakshi Dam (1959), is a difficult subject to endow with cinematic interest as well as utilitarian informational value. Films dealing with construction work and dam building have been made in many countries. It is in short a subject which has been done over and over again, and more often than not without imagination.

*Dr. Karve passed away on November 9, 1962. He was alive when the author wrote this chapter—Ed.

To take an oft-repeated subject and make it interesting, as in the case of *Mayurakshi Dam*, which won the President's Certificate of Merit for 1959, is an achievement meriting notice. This film was produced for Films Division by an independent producer, Homi Sethna. Shot in West Bengal to record the construction of an important dam, the film turns out to be a most interesting example of a creative Indian documentary in place of an ordinary information film.

It has the distinction of being a picture which is a creative whole and it manages to give the construction project a *human meaning for the people* in the area who will benefit from it. Because of the choice of poignant images and appropriate music and singing the first sequence brings alive the plight of the Bengalis whose earth is wasting away for lack of proper irrigation. By its genuine emotional content, this sequence evokes an interest in the spectator to follow the construction work on the dam with more than casual interest. Thus the process of dam building has been intelligently and feelingly related to the lives of people. At the end of the film, which closes with shots of the same people and strains of the same music, there is a sense of having witnessed something satisfying accomplished. Unity is given through the use of a folk song at the beginning and again at the end.

As is said at the beginning of this section on documentary films, the aim of the documentary is to make reality exciting and moving in film terms. Since this is the case, films such as *Drifters*, *The Quiet One* and *Mayurakshi Dam* are true examples of the documentary film. They transcend a limited information aim and become genuine human documents based on real people, real events and real settings.

Additional Films

Rabindranath Tagore, Satyajit Ray's documentary which is discussed in detail in 'Film Appreciation—the Art of Five Directors' is most strongly recommended not only to be shown as an example of Ray's work but also to represent Indian documentary at its highest development, and particularly in terms of the biographical film. The version held by the Central Film Library is the full sixty minute complete film.

Gotama the Buddha (1956), produced by Bimal Roy for Films Division and directed by Rajbans Khanna, won special mention for 'exceptional moral and artistic beauty' at the 1957 International Film Festival at Cannes. This is the longest film-feature length as yet made in any country using sculptural images. It tells the story of the life of Lord Buddha and it is a very major film. It can be presented as either an art film in conjunction with the other outstanding art films, *Khajuraho* and *Radha Krishna*; or as a film biography of a very unusual kind.

Radha Krishna (1956-58), was conceived by Jehangir Bhowm-gary when he was the Deputy Chief Producer of Films Division. It is an exceptional art film which uses paintings to tell the Krish-nalila. The Third International Film Festival at San Francisco in 1959 awarded it the Golden Gate Award for being the best art film. In the same year the Ninth International Festival in Berlin awarded it the Silver Bear as the best documentary. The film is in colour and a copy is being obtained by the Central Film Library.

Symphony of Life (1955) was produced by V. Shantaram for Films Division. It is the only Indian documentary made only with music and images and no commentary. In images it tells the story of a day in the life of the country and in 1956 it won the Gran Premio (highest prize for experimental films) at the Montevideo Film Festival.*

Spirit of the Loom, which is mentioned in the introduction is a very well-photographed film and it won the President's Gold Medal for documentaries made in 1954.

The Rights of Man, a film produced by Jehangir Bhowm-gary is an interesting film of the history of mankind—and India's struggle for freedom.

Nature's Symphony, produced and directed by Arjun Jai-ram-das is a very beautifully photographed and composed film on animals and birds in Assam and Rajasthan.

The twenty-six documentaries discussed in greater or less detail in the first and second parts of this section, plus *Film*

* The Films Division has produced two more films with music and images and without any narration. The latest film of this type is *Symphony of Seasons*—Ed.

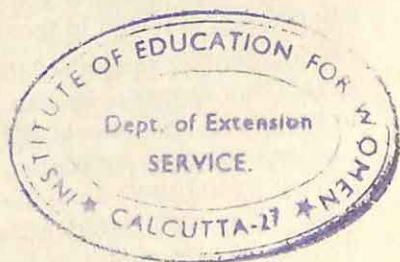
and Reality, can be used in various combinations to give any group, or film society, an appreciation of the development of the documentary film and its different techniques.

Asked to state his view as to what is a good documentary film, Jehangir Bhowmashree, who produced *Khajuraho* and made *Radha Krishna*, had this to say : 'If its (the film's) audience is to take what it has to give, to assimilate what it has to say, then the film must be able to move its audience—for there is no true assimilation, no true making something a part of oneself without emotion.

'And then for the film-maker himself, for the artist—as in all art—the film must be able to pose a problem, a problem in art which interests and impassions the maker.

'In making the documentary its maker must solve this problem to his satisfaction. The blank canvas and the virgin, unexposed film are the same—on it the maker of films paints not with brush and oil but with light ; not only on space but in time at his cutting (editing) bench ; not only with colour but also with sound.'

The films discussed above are good documentaries because their makers were impassioned with their subjects and deeply interested in the world of reality.



4

TRICK FILMS AND THE ANIMATED PICTURE

UP TO THIS POINT, this pamphlet has been concerned with how to appreciate what is known as the 'live-action' film ; that is, a film in which the action, or at any rate the main action, involves living people and real things and places, whether as recorded in reality for documentary films, or re-arranged to *look like* real life as in such fiction film as *Wages of Fear*. The only films mentioned so far which are based upon *inanimate* images are the films on art—*Khajuraho*, *Gotama the Buddha* and *Radha Krishna*. In the first, there are some shots of people going to look at the temples ; in the other two films there are only painted and sculptured images. But these are images which were created by artists long ago and they still exist in the real world as works of art.

The dancing images of stone which are edited in *Khajuraho* so that they *appear* to be dancing demonstrate that early artists, in this case, sculptors at Khajuraho in the 12th century, were striving to convey impressions of dance movements. They were seeking to *animate* before the invention of cinematography made animation of sculptured, or drawn images, actually fully possible. Indeed, the very earliest artists known—the cave-painters of remotest antiquity—were intensely fascinated by movement and they

strove to draw their images to suggest animals and man in motion. This idea of the birth of animation is shown in some detail in my own film, *Drawings that Walk and Talk*, a subject which impassioned me because of the capacity of the most widely appreciated style of animated film—the cartoon—to capture the imagination of intellectual and uneducated alike.

Very early in the history of cinema, film-makers turned to the idea of what is called the 'trick film' which served as the base for the later development of the cartoon and puppet film. For example, in the early days Georges Melies in France made his famous film *Trip to the Moon* which was full of trick shots, and who, as will be seen from the section 'Notes on the French Cinema', was able in 1896 to make it *seem* that a pumpkin suddenly turned into a coach. This was achieved through his discovery of stop-shot photography. For those who want to delve into the development of the trick film and see a diversity of examples, the Central Film Library has the specially prepared British Film Institute picture called *Early Trick Films*.

You will have gathered from what was said concerning the French cinema that the elements of the trick film have persisted in many forms today. The elements are by no means unknown in Indian entertainment films. For example, the images of dancers reflected in mirrors in *Mughal-e-Azam* are essentially trick shots. Of a similar kind are the images of characters contained within magnified drops of beer in *Odd Man Out*, the third of the series *Critic and the Film*.

But the most important branches of film-making to evolve from the trick film are the cartoon and the sub-division, the silhouette film, the classics of which are those of Lotte Reiniger; the puppet film; and films known as experimental (or 'avant-garde'), and in this pamphlet represented by the work of Norman McLaren because the Central Film Library has two of his most engaging films.

Trick film technique—and it must be remembered that this term covers a great variety of processes—includes such frequently undetected technical 'tricks' as the use of models, for instance, sailing ships set on fire for a 'battle' scene which is enacted with tiny model ships in a studio tank of water, and the construction

of models of 'monsters' which are animated with movement in horror films.

But trick film is also essential to almost all films which deal with fantasy. Paul Rotha has made the observation that 'the potentialities of the film in the realm of fantasy are unlimited and are to be found hidden away in practically every side of general (film) production. The inherent fantastic nature of the cinema at once suggests a hundred ideas which are impossible of being expounded in any other medium...The consummate ease with which magic can be achieved by double exposure and trick effects on the screen suggests the wide range of material waiting to be utilized.' These particular words were written in 1930 since which time there has continued to be a vast amount of experiment.

In 'Film Appreciation—the Art of Five Directors', Satyajit Ray's biographical film, *Rabindranath Tagore*, is discussed at some length. This film is very largely constructed from shots of inanimate material, particularly pictures and old photographs. In order to extract a dynamic filmic impression from this material, Ray employed approximately 1,000 opticals which entailed a vast amount of laboratory work. He confessed to me that the making of this film was more arduous for him than making three feature films, this because of the need to bring cinematic life to so much inanimate material.

No one seeing even the shortest and most seemingly simple cartoon, or puppet film, should imagine for one moment that its making was easy. Every such little film—let alone the long ones and the full-length feature film ones—entail enormous work, and work of the utmost precision. The makers' reward is that these films are perhaps, as a style, the most popular and widely appreciated of all films.

Cartoons

Both the animation of the cartoon film and the puppet film is based on the same principle of optics. All movements that we see on the screen are based upon the fact that any image which the eye perceives remains for a fraction of a second imprinted on the mind. Even when the object is removed we feel its presence. It is this optical phenomenon known as persistence of vision which

fascinated inventors and, over a long period, led to the final invention of the cinema. One of the early mechanical toys—the Zoetrope—which was a far step towards the Lumiere brothers' perfection of the motion-picture is shown in the history of the cartoon film, *Drawings That Walk and Talk*.

In the making of all kinds of films, the motion-picture camera (for cartoon films it is an over-head camera looking down on the animation table, and the same applies to the silhouette-film), registers the movements in fractions. When these images of movements are projected on the screen in rapid succession, what our mind sees is continuous movement.

In order to create the cartoon film, each individual image, each showing the progression of the movements to be seen, are drawn and painted separately as a series of pictures. The background, when it is to remain the same, is painted on transparent plastic so that it can be shifted from drawing to drawing. Then these pictures are photographed in succession and, thus, the separate images are animated into motion.

For puppet films the principle is the same, only the figures themselves have moveable limbs and some have different heads to show a change in facial expression. An upright and not an overhead camera is used.

Drawings That Walk and Talk (1938), produced by the National Film Library of the British Film Institute was written, directed and compiled by the present author, Marie Seton, with the assistance of Karl Heinz Frank, a German technician who had come to England. The music was devised by Barbara Banner.

The thirty-five minute film frequently relates the unfolding development of the cartoon—from the very earliest Emil Cohl cartoons up to the two cartoon classics of Walt Disney *Steamboat Willie*, the first Mickey Mouse film, and *Skeleton Dance*, the first Silly Symphony, and on to the first cartoon, *Joie de Vivre*, to consciously aim to be a sophisticated art excursion into the cartoon medium.

One of the things which it is most interesting to observe in the pre-Disney cartoons is the marvellous use of imagination.

The silent cartoon, *Stork Exchange*, has never been excelled for expressiveness of incident or for liveliness of humour, nor for adaptation of topical events to an old, old fable. Another most interesting thing is the remarkable use of drawings which in terms of cinematic composition are ahead of anything being done at the same time in the 'live-action' film. An example, is the early *Mutt and Jeff* film (adapted from the comic strip of that name) where the blindfolded Mutt (he has a saucepan jammed over his head) climbs up to the furthest roof projection of a skyscraper and we see the cross-section of streets with their traffic far below. This drawing indicates a most outstanding sense of dramatic composition and a true film sense. There is also quite tremendous daring of imagination with wonderful visual projection of images in *Popeye the Sailor*, an early sound cartoon. The utmost sense of rhythm is achieved when the sleep-walking sweetheart of Popeye walks in her sleep from one moving girder to another.

As G.H. Saraiya has most pertinently written about the cartoon film in the special issue of 'Marg' on documentary films of India : 'Because characters in the cartoon film by convention enjoy the privileges that used to be enjoyed once by the court jester, a cartoon character, without offending anybody, may speak in any way it likes, it may behave in any manner it pleases, or it may do miracles or things which otherwise look impossible. There is a sort of special cinematic licence given to cartoon films which audiences take for granted, and this is why the cartoon film is the vehicle through which difficult ideas or unpleasant and bitter truths which the audience may not otherwise like to accept from anyone, are assimilated by them willingly.'

I was possessed by an intense passion to make *Drawings That Walk and Talk* because I had observed the reaction of audiences to every type of cartoon film. It seemed to me that here was the 20th century's most effective means of keeping alive the old fairy tales, and tales told in past times in all the markets of the world ; that the cartoon was also the means of creating a 20th century folklore in moving pictures.

And here I will interject some comments on the meaning of the greatest of all film cartoonists, Walt Disney, and his enormous

staff. Disney's work has been most interestingly written of by Richard Griffith: 'In a depression world, (Disney's films first appeared just before the Depression of 1929), the Disney fancies provided the most eagerly-sought escape and release. In Disneyland, violence and repressed aggression might find outlet without harm, for everything ended in sweetness and humanity. There was no meanness in any of these anthropomorphic characters, not even in the villains who were comic rather than evil. It was pleasant to leave city streets and live with them awhile.'

He continues by saying that 'the secret of Disney's technical superiority over other screen cartoonists lay in two things: his understanding of the possibilities of distortion in draughtsmanship, and his feeling for film rhythm.....The formal dance in *Skeleton Dance*, with its rhythmic accompaniment of expressive sounds and music, forecast the later work in which the whole animate and inanimate world seemed to dance to the measure of the arbitrary and mercurial sound track.'

When I visited the Disney studios in Hollywood, I was confronted with the explanation as to how it came about that his most famous characters—Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Pluto and all the others, including the characters in his full-length feature films—seem so extremely human. (I had made a stabbing guess in *Drawings That Walk and Talk*, one based on intuition rather than factual knowledge). I met the technicians who served as the human prototype. Donald Duck, for example, was modelled on one of the musical composers working at the studios. I went to lunch with the Witch in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, for this character's appearance was based on that of a young woman working in the Disney script department. She, and the composer, explained that all the Disney characters were built up from observation of real people and their mannerisms, so that they became composite portraits. Many of the incidents in the films are collectively created, again partly on observation from life.

Success on a vast scale, and an ever-increasing number of technicians, did not lead to greater creativity. Indeed, to the reverse for the most perfect examples of Disneyland's inspiration is

found in the earlier rather than the later and more ambitious films. It can be said that the making of 'big money' robbed Disney and his crew of the great imagination which appears in such early films as those included in *Drawings That Walk and Talk*.

I believed that the subject of *Drawings That Walk and Talk* was very vital when I made it. I admit that I conceived it in the hope that it would not date. It interests me to find that in the 1959-60 'Film Teacher's Handbook', published by the Society for Education in 'Film and Television', this film heads the list for classroom use as being one of 'a modern approach'.

At the time this film was completed countries other than Britain, France and the United States had already commenced to utilize cartoon technique for more conscious instructional purposes. The vast Phillips radio concern in Holland had engaged the Hungarian, George Pal, to make both cartoon and puppet films for advertising purposes. Pal's films in both mediums had a particularly delightful sparkle of individuality.

Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union a great development of cartoon technique was taking place. This was a conscious use of the medium for the expression of instructional and indirectly educational ideas. The Central Film Library has many examples of Russian cartoons, but I will single out one as embodying what can be called a distinctively Russian style. This is the colour cartoon of twenty-two minutes entitled *The Brave Heart of a Man*. This cartoon is based on a Chinese legend, or fairy tale, with a great deal of moral content.

It tells the story of two brothers who go on a tiger hunt. The tiger attacks one brother and the other runs away. The mother tells her cowardly son he must go and find his brother and that a feather will lead him. She gives him a sword. So the surviving brother, at his mother's bidding, follows the feather and meets many dangers and terrible adventures, as in classic epics. Finally, he meets his great test of the tiger, a fire and the ghost of his brother.

I showed this film, which is intrinsically artistic and worthy of being studied by any group for its presentation of ideas, to

the 1st and 2nd standards of the Delhi Public School. It might be called a controlled showing in that a number of teachers took down the discussion which the children had with me immediately after the film was screened. It evoked a great number of comments and here are some of them :

'I like it because both brothers meet at last'.

'I like it because the brother killed the tiger'.

'I liked the ghost'. (The ghost of the mountain)

'I liked it because the brother was saved from the fire'.

'I liked it because the brother (formerly the coward) was saved from the fire'.

'I liked it for its colour and its style'.

From the reactions of the children it appears that they were conscious of the details of the content, and that the quite obviously moral content was probably enhanced by the fact that this is a very powerful cartoon in its technique and that its use of colour is very excellent.

Since 1945, Czechoslovakia is one of the countries which has produced extremely engaging cartoons. The Czechs have experimented with using the cartoon medium in a very entertaining manner in order to explain certain instructional ideas. One of the most popular, and altogether delightful cartoons held in the Central Film Library, is *The Trees and the Wind*.

I have projected and discussed this film with very diverse groups ranging from children in various schools to teachers in training, university students, members of film societies and film technicians. All have responded to this film which I have used as an exercise to illustrate that expressive films convey their stories through imagery rather than through the spoken word.

Trees and the Wind has a slight commentary in the Czech language and no English sub-titles, nor any dubbed in Hindi. Its instructional theme is that the reckless cutting down of trees causes erosion. This theme is carried out not only through human and animal characters but the personalizing of the sun, the windy clouds and the trees. Charming Czechoslovak folk music is used and the whole spirit of the film is very Czech in style. Up to now, I have never come across any group-children or

adults—who could not follow this film and its instructional theme. There has been nobody who has not agreed that this is a very skilful way of instructing while entertaining.

There is one other cartoon which merits mention and recommendation for film appreciation which is not in the Central Film Library, but which can be obtained through the British Council or the British Information Services. This is *Energetically Yours*, produced for Esso and drawn by the very well-known cartoonist, Ronald Searle. This film traces the entire history of energy, or power, from pre-historic times up to the present. It is an immensely informative film, but at the same time it is a masterpiece of humorous imagination.

If I was asked to vote as to which of the four cartoons were the most perfect use of the cartoon medium, I should single out in the silent era *Stork Exchange*; for an imaginative use of music, *Disney's Skeleton Dance* (both these films are in *Drawings That Walk and Talk*); and for the graphic expression of highly complex ideas, *Energetically Yours*, and the marvellous full-length Czech film, *Creation of the World*.

Puppets

The principle operating in the animation of the puppet film is described in the previous section. For one second's running time of film, 24 frames, or separate shots of film are photographed, which means for the movement of a puppet's arm to be shown, a corresponding number of minute changes in its arm's position must be photographed. This would indicate that puppet film-making is a laborious task, even when it is a very short and simple puppet film. So the precision work involved in making a full-length feature film like *The Emperor's Nightingale*, based on the Hans Anderson fairy tale, is really an enormous undertaking.

It is believed that the first puppet film, using figures of beetles, was created in 1913 in Russia by Igor Starewitch, who later went to France where he made a number of puppet films with animal figures in the 1920's and 1930's. One of his best known films was the legend of *Reynaud the Fox*. Then, George Pal,

mentioned in connection with cartoons, commenced to experiment in Holland, also in the 1930's. Whereas, Starewich used figures stuffed and covered with cloth, Pal's odd little figures, and of considerably smaller in dimensions, were of wood with flexible arms and legs and a set of heads.

In 1937, the most ambitious production of a puppet film was undertaken in Moscow under the direction of an artist named Petrov. This was *The New Gulliver*, an adaptation of the famous book *Gulliver's Travels*. In this film, Gulliver was acted by a boy, but all the inhabitants of Lilliput were puppets made of plasticine, each with a number of different heads to allow for changes in expression. *The New Gulliver* was something of a landmark in the evolution of the puppet film.

Also in the 1930's, Czechoslovakia, now the country most noted for the production of puppet films, commenced to evolve a style. The main collection of Central Film Library puppet films are Czech and produced since 1945. While they can be regarded as children's films, in that they are suitable for children, they are worthy of study by others on account of the social import of their themes and the technique which is of a very high level.

One, *The Revolt of the Toys*, is of considerable historical interest because, in terms of an amusing puppet film, it reflects the war years when the people of Czechoslovakia were occupied by the Germans. The rebelling toys who rout the Nazi in this film are in essence the voice of the people themselves who resisted occupation. Passion and imagination are shown in this film.

In *The Nine Chickens*, intended for very young children and created by Hermina Tyrlova, a moral against selfishness is preached. The central character is a selfish little chick who cheats his eight brothers and sisters of their corn. He stuffs himself and runs off to eat alone. In his dash he falls into a pit out of which he cannot scramble. He is rescued by his brothers and sisters pulling together and he vows to turn over a new leaf and reform.

All of this woman puppeteer's films have some sort of moral. The material which she uses to animate is very diverse. She has even constructed one film around an animated handkerchief and its adventures.

Another Czech puppet film director, who displays a very great deal of imagination, is Karel Zeman, who has made a film called *Inspiration* where all the figures used are made of glass. But Zeman's best known films, of which there are five in the Central Film Library, are the series woven around the character of Mr. Prokoup, a wooden figure with spindley arms and very often a straw hat—a figure distinctly recalling some of the figures of George Pal.

Mr. Prokoup's various adventures are as a peg to hang either an instructional idea or a moral precept as their titles indicate : *Mr. Prokoup as an Inventor*, *Mr. Prokoup Makes a Film*, *Mr. Prokoup in the office*, *Mr. Prokoup's Conversion* and *The Temptation of Mr. Prokoup*.

The last mentioned film is an amusing tract against the evils of too much drink. It is full of humour and it speaks most effectively even though there are no words—only music. While it deals with a moral problem, or a very practical one since getting drunk prevents Mr. Prokoup from building his dream house for far too long, it distinctly has the flavour of an experimental film and can be used as such. It is one of the most engaging examples of a film that actually preaches but entertains while it does so.

The most famous puppet film maker of today is Czechoslovakia's truly great artist, Jiri Trnka, whose films embrace an enormous range of subjects, including Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the famous Czech war novel, *The Good Soldier Schweik* by Jaroslav Hasek, which was read all over the European continent between the two world wars. Trnka is a mastercraftsman as well as a deeply creative artist. The Czechoslovak Embassy in Delhi has a film which shows his technique and exactly how his films are made .

The Central Film Library has two of Trnka's long films, *The Emperor's Nightingale* and the Czech legend *Prince Bayaya*. Both of these films, which have distinctly philosophic undertones, are very rich in imagination. The range of style of his puppets in different films is very great indeed. Apart from Trnka's own production, his studio has trained other very talented puppet film makers such as Bretislav Pojar, whose film *A Drop Too Much* is one of the well-known examples of Czech puppet films.

Czechoslovakia has proved so exceptionally rich in the production of this particular style of film on account of the long tradition of Czech puppetry which dates back three centuries. Throughout the history of Czech puppetry it has been venerated as a vehicle for the preservation of the national idiom. Throughout the 20th century, the puppet theatre, which served as the cradle for the puppet film, has been devoted to the idea of educating through this traditional art form.

Silhouette Films

The image used in the silhouette film is, like the traditional silhouette, cut out with scissors from black paper. The camera employed in making such films is an overhead camera and the actual technique is very closely related to the production of cartoon films.

Ever since the early 1920's there has been sporadic production of this style of film, one of the most recent being an experimental film financed by the British Film Institute and interpreting passages from the Italian poet Dante. But the master of the silhouette film remains Lotte Reiniger, who commenced her work in Germany in the early '20's, then went to Paris where her assistant was Berthold Bartosch, the Czech, who created one exceptional film with cut-out figures, *The Idea*. By the 1930's Lotte Reiniger came to England with her technician husband, Karl Koch, where she remained. As Paul Rotha says: 'There have been several imitations of Lotte Reiniger's work, but they can be detected with ease by their inferior craftsmanship'.

The early, and silent silhouette pictures of Lotte Reiniger were invariably based on famous fairy tales, although it should be stressed that she was not making these films with child audiences in mind, but to appeal to that section of filmgoers interested in 'avant-garde'. At first her films were mainly shown on film society programmes. Only later were they included in the programmes of specialized cinemas. Among her best known early films are *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* and *Cinderella*.

With the coming of sound, Lotte Reiniger became interested in films based on episodes drawn from famous operas. The two

examples of her work in the Central Film Library are both her interpretations of operatic scenes. One is *Carmen* based on the characters and an incident from Bizet's opera. The other is *Papageno*, the birdcatcher of Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*.

Papageno is a little masterpiece of delicate and humorous imagination and it uses some of Mozart's most lovely music and songs. Attention should be drawn to the very subtle effects achieved in the backgrounds where the trees appear in varying tones of grey which contrast with the black figures in the foreground. The varying grey tones were achieved by cutting out the background figures in white tissue paper, but using as many as seven layers. Thus, the source of light being underneath the animation table, the grey effects were easy to achieve.

This film, like Lotte Reiniger's other pictures, was produced with the absolute minimum of collective work. The animation table and the animation camera were set up in her own house and she is one of the very few film artists who has ever been able to work in her own home with a small part of it rigged up as an animation studio. This also applies to her one-time assistant, Berthold Bartosch, one of the most uniquely original talents in films.

The Experimental—'Cameraless' Films of Norman McLaren

It is stressed that John Grierson trained many people in the art of documentary film-making. But Grierson had vision to detect the talent of those who did not fit into the concept of the documentary film movement. One of these in the mid-1930's was Len Lye, who experimented with the animation of abstract coloured images synchronized with sound and music. His 'avant-garde' efforts were mainly financed by the G. P. O. Film Unit, headed by Grierson.

In 1936, only a few years before Grierson went to Canada as Film Commissioner and founded the National Film Board of Canada, he acted as the judge at the Third Scottish Amateur Film Festival. Entered in this Festival was a 200-foot abstract film made in Dufaycolor called *Colour Cocktail* made by Norman McLaren, then a young art student at the Glasgow School of Art. Grierson was so excited by this film that he picked up McLaren,

brought him to London and threw him into the company of Alberto Cavalcanti, the poet W. H. Auden and the composer Benjamin Britten. McLaren went to work on experimental films of his own devising for the G. P. O. Film Unit. According to Grierson, McLaren 'developed in that group, and proved to be one of the greatest experimentalists of them all'. 'He worked for two years with G.P.O'.

In 1939, on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War, McLaren migrated to New York where the Guggenheim Museum, specializing in abstract art, employed him to make two films by what came to be known as his 'cameraless' method. The sound for these films was synthetic. McLaren remained in New York until 1941 when he went to join the National Film Board of Canada where he has remained ever since, except when he has been on loan to Unesco. In 1949, he was sent by Unesco to China where he trained a group of artists in the techniques of animation. In 1953, Unesco borrowed him again, this time to visit India in connection with the training of film-workers for fundamental education projects.

The range of experimental films produced on the most individual basis by Norman McLaren is enormous—from such pictures as *Begone Dull Care*, discussed below, to the much more recent *Chairy Tale* where a man is plagued by an animated chair which won't allow him to sit down on it! The music for this charming oddity was played by Ravi Shankar.

In general, it can be said of McLaren's films that 'They create an imaginary world with violent action, usually humorous'. But his imagery, generally abstract, or near-abstract, flows 'straight out of his subconscious, that vast unknown region of the mind, that contains, some psychologists say, not only our own past, but the past of the race since time begin'. He has said that if one of his images turns out a failure it is due to his conscious mind invading his intuitive work. Of all 'avant-garde' film-makers, Norman McLaren has been the most widely popular with his films being shown in a great number of countries.

William E. Jordan, in his pamphlet on McLaren, is of the opinion that 'the popularity of Norman McLaren's films is certainly due in a large measure to their appeal to the senses regardless

of their subject matter. His films are predominantly animations ; that is, *lifelike* qualities are given to what is ordinarily considered inanimate. In some instances he simply *animates* abstract designs in colour and line'.

In writing about his own theories, McLaren has said that his film-making is a one-man operation from start to finish. I have tried to preserve in my relationship to the film, the same closeness and intimacy that exists between a painter and his canvas'. It is undoubtedly most rewarding to the spectator to view McLaren's films *which are always experimental* as if they are viewing modern abstract art in a state of animated motion.

He continues by saying : 'This (intimacy) is rather difficult, for in one case only a stick of wood with a tuft of camel hair intervenes between the maker and the finished result, and in the other (film-making), an elaborate series of optical, chemical and mechanical processes, which become a perfect breeding ground for lack of intimacy, frustrations, ill feeling and hostility between the artist and his finished work. And so my militant philosophy is this : to make with a brush on canvas is a simple and direct delight—to make with a movie should be the same'.

This explains McLaren's unique technique : He frequently, but not exclusively, produces animation of images, or sounds (that is, synthetic sounds), without the use of any camera. He commenced this method when he was at the Glasgow School of Art and had no camera. He took worn-out 35mm. celluloid and patiently washed off the emulsion of the images on it until he reached the transparent base. Then he painted directly on to the clear surface. Today he uses the same method, only he uses new stock.

To make such pictures as *Fiddle-De-Dee*, he paints over 7,000 miniature pictures each $3/4$ inch by $5/8$ inch into a roll of celluloid roughly 500 feet long, using 35mm. stock. Each image differs slightly from the one before it. He uses ordinary pen and ink, and brushes and coloured inks to produce his abstract patterns. As a rule the music is recorded first. This music sound track is developed and then marked to show where the beats, rhythms, distinctive sounds and crescendos come. This enables McLaren to 'plot' his accompanying imagery. In many of his films he

disregards the 'frame' divisions (24 to the second for sound films, but 16 for silent), so that what is seen ultimately on the screen is not created image by image but as a pattern flowing along many frames. The above description refers to the way he produces his visuals.

I will describe in his own words how McLaren produces synthetic sound : 'I draw a lot of lines on the sound-track area on the 35mm. film. Maybe 50 or 60 lines for every musical note. The number of strokes to the inch controls the pitch of the note : the more, the higher the pitch ; the fewer, the lower is the pitch. The size of the stroke controls the loudness : a big stroke will go 'boom', a smaller stroke will give a quieter sound... A black ink is another way of making a loud sound...and a very pale ink will make a very quiet sound. The tone quality, which is the most difficult element to control, is made by the shape of the strokes...By drawing or exposing two or more patterns on the same bit of film I can create harmony and textural effects'.

The Central Film Library has two of McLaren's most famous films.

Fiddle-De-Dee (1947), represents McLaren's 'cameraless' abstract film. It was hand-painted, the images being painted largely without regard to the frame divisions on the celluloid. The length is 200 feet. McLaren found an old-time fiddler playing the piece of music called 'Listen to the Mocking Bird' and employed him to play the music for the film. The images are formed of lines, splashes of colour of infinite variety which come together and flow somewhat like textile patterns. The patterns split apart, change, change again, all the time dancing in perfect rhythm with the music.

This film very naturally created a sensation and caused the most varied reactions in different people. It is reported that one of the delegates to a convention of the Ontario Registered Music Teachers' Association, jumped to his feet on seeing the film and shouted furiously : 'What does the National Film Board mean, spending public money on such futuristic nonsense ?' But in the Georgetown Theatre of Washington, D.C., an old lady of ninety went to the manager and startled him greatly by telling

him that *Fiddle-De-Dee* was the most delightful film she had ever seen in a cinema !

At a Berlin Film Festival, 7000 people saw the film and, according to the German critic, Hans Wilfert, 'sane hotheads in the audience, whose dullness the film was not able to banish, reacted with whistling, but this caused the majority of the mostly young audience to increase their applause'. To a certain extent any audiences' reaction depends upon either how spontaneous they are in the giving of themselves to the enjoyment of this film, or how responsive they are to modern art.

Begone Dull Care (1949), hand-coloured, and made with the same technique as *Fiddle-De-Dee*. The music is played by Oscar Peterson's Jazz trio.

The first night I was in Ahmedabad to give a film seminar as the preliminary step for setting up a film society there, I showed *Fiddle-De-Dee* as the kind of film which is appropriate for film society programmes. It startled some people. But when three nights later, I asked the audience if they would like to see another McLaren film—*Begone Dull Care*—there was the greatest enthusiasm for seeing another example.

As William E. Jordan says of these two intriguing films : 'To try to appreciate *Fiddle-De-Dee* or *Begone Dull Care* with the intellect is beside the point, for their sole function is to divert the ear with their rhythms and to amuse the eye with their dancing patterns'.

Norman McLaren is a most ingenious creator of film. Some of his patterns, for example, in *Begone Dull Care*, were actually suggested by his observation of the scratches produced by projectors ! Between 1934 and 1954 completed thirty-nine films, every one of them experimental.

Films To Aid the Development of Film Appreciation

The last chapter ended with a detailed account of Norman McLaren's methods of making his short experimental abstract films, which represent a very subtle and sophisticated use of the film medium. A considerable diversity of films available

from the Central Film Library have been discussed in these pages—a range of feature films, documentaries which run from the simple to the complex, and different styles of animated films. This, the last chapter, comes back to the very beginning of cinema and to a group of specially prepared films to help the student of film appreciation to get to grips with how the motion-picture has developed, and how several special films can be used for study.

The British Film Institute has paid much attention to preparing films which can be said to telescope the historical development of film-making. Some of these films have been acquired by the Central Film Library. Cinema began when the Lumiere brothers in Paris won the race for perfecting the invention of 'the movies', so the first film of interest for those who want to see the very earliest films, is the picture entitled *Lumiere Programme*. This film when shown with any feature film dating from the mid-1920's to today (let us say Sergei Eisenstein's *General Line* or Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Wages of Fear*), will illustrate how rapidly the cinema has evolved from the crude to the refined.

Documentary films have evolved from a very early type of film-making, one which was called 'actuality', and there is a film compiled of early examples of such films and called *Early Actualities*. This is worth seeing. Mention has already been made of the picture called *Early Trick Films*, which would be interesting to show on a programme including such films as *The Temptation of Mr. Prokoud* and Lotte Reiniger's *Carmen*.

Then there are three films which can form a trio, starting with *Facts About Films* and following up with *Beginning of Cinema*, the third picture being *Selection of Early Films*. The importance of the last named is that it contains examples of the work of the great pioneer, David Wark Griffith, one of the giants of cinema history; the man who did so much to expand the whole concept of film-making and who influenced film-makers all over the world.

There are many people who consider that to date there have been four giants in cinema—David Wark Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Robert Flaherty and Sergei Eisenstein.

Chaplin has been mentioned in the introductory chapter of this booklet. More books have been written about the art of Chaplin than any other artist in cinema. Paul Rotha has written that Chaplin's 'greatest asset (as an artist) is his deep understanding of human nature.....No man has made Chaplin what he is today save Chaplin himself. He believes in two things : himself and the cinema'.

Sergei Eisenstein, who knew Chaplin, wrote a long study of him under the title 'Charlie the Kid'. (This appears in 'Notes of a Film Director', published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, and available in India). Eisenstein claims that Chaplin's universal appeal lies in the fact that he has seen things and presented them on the screen as if *through the eyes of a child*. Certainly Chaplin is the greatest pantomime artist who has ever lived and moved people to laughter and near tears.

There are three films of Chaplin available from the Library : *Chaplin's First Film*, which is a compilation of a number of his earliest pictures ; *Dough and Dynamite* and *The Champion*, where the distinctiveness of Chaplin is already very highly developed. Chaplin, being one of the greatest of the cinema's true innovators, his films—any of them—can be combined in many programmes, for his art is the very epitome of cinema, it being so intensely visual. His genius developed during the silent era but proved no less effective with the coming of sound.

It is interesting for those studying either the history of cinema or pursuing film appreciation, to see a technical film about the cinema, *How Talkies Talk*, a Gaumont-British picture.

Frequent mention has been made of two films on the history of cinema, and these, *Drawings That Walk and Talk* and *Film and Reality*, call for mention here in that they can be used—and particularly the latter film which is in four parts—to study short extracts from very many films. By using all the films mentioned in this section, any group interested in the cinema's history can get a very thorough bird's eye view of its thematic, technical and social development.

The British Film Institute has found that a very satisfactory way to introduce people to film appreciation has been through the preparation of study extracts. Such study extracts have been made of a number of films discussed in my two pamphlets, notably from *Brief Encounter*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Wages of Fear*, *Children of Hiroshima*, *Ivan the Terrible*, *Potemkin*, *General Line*, *Nanook of the North* and *Back of Beyond*.

Study extracts are usually, if not always, devoted to the most important sequence in a film; preferably one that is, as far as possible, self-explanatory such as the Odessa Stairs sequence in *Potemkin*. The Central Film Library has such study extracts from two films—*Children of Hiroshima* and the very noted German film *Kamaradschaft* (*Comradeship*) directed by Pabst.

The *Children of Hiroshima* extract is one which I prepared in 1955 to bring to India when I first came here. It is composed of two sequences, that of the bombing which is impressionistic, and the later sequence where the young teacher visits the home of one of her surviving pupils whose crippled sister is about to be married. These two sequences convey the spirit and style of the whole film. I found the use of these extracts extremely effective when shown to the most diverse groups.

I also used the extract of *Kamaradschaft* very extensively in 1955-56 and it was utilized to illustrate realism in a story film. This film, directed by G. W. Pabst in 1932, represents the last flowering of the German cinema before the advent of Hitler. The extract constitutes the very heart of this film which was consciously made to breach against war. It shows how a group of German miners on the Franco-German border go to the aid of their French comrades at the moment of a mine disaster, even though the French and Germans were traditional enemies. Pabst based his film on an actual incident of a mine disaster early in the century; but to make it more effective he presented it as though it were happening in 1932 when he made the film.

The style of the film is in accord with the fact that the story itself was one drawn from reality. The lighting throughout is natural; the settings are real and not studio-built, except for the scenes in the mine itself and the explosion. The actors in the film all appear as if they were real people and it is an

example of very great realism which pre-dates by some fifteen years the 'neo-realism' achieved in Italy by Vittorio de Sica in *Bicycle Thieves*.

Because of the very distinct message preaching comradeship, Pabst's film is one of the feature films selected for recommendation to British secondary schools.

Both these study extracts are sub-titled in English.

The last and most important film to be mentioned again in connection with film appreciation is *The Critic and the Film* series, prepared by the B.F.I., and in the Library. The series is composed of three films, each of which is a deeper analysis of the films selected. The first is devoted to an analysis as to why the opening sequence of David Lean's *Great Expectations* is also dramatically effective. Only a few shots are broken down and discussed in great detail. But this breaking-down and discussion introduces the spectator to an understanding not only of the opening of the particular film under examination, but of how a film director goes about the construction of shots full of suspense.

The second film, discussing Harry Watt's picture *The Overlanders*, is a somewhat more detailed analysis. One can call it step two in the process of film analysis. It is the third film of the series which is the most valuable—*Odd Man out*, discussed as to its construction by Basil Wright. Here the spectator gets a view of the structure of the whole film and the inclusion of many sequences with shots inter-cut of Wright using a blackboard and drawing diagrams to indicate the development of the construction, sequence by sequence.

When this study of *Odd Man Out* was shown at Agra University Film Club, it inspired the club, through its secretary, Satish Bahadur, assistant professor of sociology, to make a similar diagrammatic analysis of Satyajit Ray's film, *Pather Panchali*. Thus, it is demonstrated that a really alive and vivid study film such as *Odd Man Out* can inspire people to set about their own analysis of the structure of a very important film.

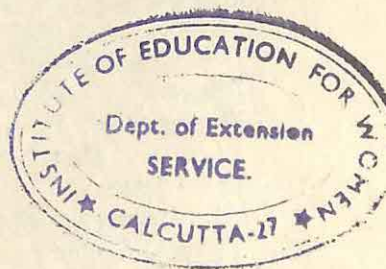
This is exactly what film appreciation at its best and most vital should be able to stimulate groups of people setting

about the making of their own analysis of films which they feel to be important. This is what is known as active participation.

In conclusion, I find this attractive definition of 'film' in 'An argument' by Tony Hodgkinson published in the 1959-60 'Film Teacher's Handbook' : 'Film is a mosaic method—a mosaic in which each individual fragment has to be quarried, shaped and coloured separately'.

And as for film appreciation, it is well described in an article which appeared on July 26, 1947, in the London Times Educational Supplement, where Edgar John wrote about an experiment conducted among workers. He says : 'The aim of film appreciation is to increase the viewer's enjoyment of films by widening the range of their criticisms, by showing that there is more in pictures than the plot and the glamour of the stars, and that there are certain techniques that are very important to the worth of a film'.

I hope that these two pamphlets devoted to discussing the major films in the Central Film Library will inspire many people to embark on film appreciation. There are two societies of different types in India which have developed film appreciation to a very high degree. These are the Calcutta film Society, of which one of the founder-members was the director Satyajit Ray long before he made his first film ; the other is the Agra University Film Club. Both have produced extremely good written material on the films they have shown, many of which have come from the Central Film Library.



APPENDIX—I

SUGGESTED PROGRAMMES

SIX PROGRAMMES OF FILM CLASSICS

No. 1

1. *Mayurakshi Dam* (1959), Indian Documentary 16 mins.
2. *Mr. Prokoudk Turns Inventor*, Czech Puppet Film 10 mins.
3. *Bicycle Thieves* (1949), Italian

Directed by Vittorio de Sica

Based on story by Luigi Bartolini

Scenario Cesare Zavattini

Music Alessandro Cicognini

Cast

Antonio, the Father

Lamberto Maggiorani

Bruno, the Son

Enzo Staiola

No. 2

1. *North Sea* (1938), British Documentary 35 mins.

Production

G. P. O. Film Unit

Producer

Alberto Cavalcanti

Direction and Scenario

Harry Watt

Photography

H.E. Fowle and Johah Jones

Music

Ernst Meyer

2. *Brief Encounter* (1945), British

Production

Cineguild

Producers

Anthony Havelock-Allan and

Ronald Neame

Direction

David Lean

Scenario

Noel Coward

Photography

Robert Krasker

Cast

Laura Jesson

Celia Johnson

Alex Harvey

Trevor Howard

Ticket Collector

Stanley Holloway

Barmald

Joyce Carey

No. 3

1. *Fiddle-De-Dee* (1947), Canadian Animated Film. Colour
9 mins. Drawn by Norman McLaren
2. *Carmen* German Silhouette Film
Made by Lotte Reiniger. 10 mins.
3. *Pather Panchali* (1955), Indian (Bengali)
Produced by West Bengal Government
Scenario and Direction Satyajit Ray
Based on novel Bibhutibhusan Banerji
Photography Subrata Mitra
Music Ravi Shankar

Cast

Sarbajaya	Karuna Banerji
Harihar, her Husband	Kanu Banerji
Durga, their daughter	Uma Das Gupta
Apu, their son	Subir Banerji
Indir, an ancient relative	Chunibala
Schoolmaster	Tulsi Chakravarti

No. 4

1. *Tragic Pursuit of Perfection* (1953), French 26 mins.
(The Documentary biography of the great Italian artist-
scientist, Leonardo da Vinci)
English Commentary
2. Charles Chaplin's *Early Films* (1914-17), American 16 mins.
(A Collection of Extracts)
3. *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), Russian (Sound added in 1952) 55 mins.

Production and Scenario Sergei M. Eisenstein
 Production First Studio, Goskino, Moscow
 Direction and Scenario Sergei Eisenstein
 Associate Director Grigori V. Alexandrov
 Photography Eduard Tisse
 (See also Programme No. 3 History of Cinema)

No. 5

1. *Industrial Britain* (1933) British 20 mins.
 Production Empire Marketing Board
 Producers John Grierson and Robert Flaherty
 Direction and Scenario Robert Flaherty
 (See also Programme No. 5 Programmes for Further Special Study)

2. *The River* (1937), American 35 mins.
 Production Resettlement Administration, U.S. Government
 Direction and Scenario Pere Lorentz
 Photography Willard van Dyke, Stacy Woodard and Floyd Crosbie
 Music Virgil Thomson
 Narration Thomas Chalmers

3. *Louisiana Story* (1946-48), American
 Production Robert J. Flaherty Productions Inc.
 Direction Robert J. Flaherty
 Scenario Robert J. Flaherty and Frances Flaherty
 Photography Richard Leacock
 Music Virgil Thomson
 Editing Helen van Dongen

No. 6

1. *Vincent Van Gogh* French (Black and White) 20 mins.
 (The biography of the great painter)
 Direction and Scenario Alan Resnais
2. *Khajuraho* (1956) Indian Documentary
3. *L'Atalante* (1934) French
 Production J. L. Nounez-Gaumont
 Direction Jean Vigo
 Scenario Jean Guinee
 Adaptation and Dialogue Jean Vigo and Albert Riere
 Photography Boris Kaufman
 Music Maurice Jaubert
 Cast
 'Pere' Jules Michel Simon
 Juliette Dita Parlo
 Jean Jean Deste

(As this film has no English sub-titles, the detailed synopsis given in this pamphlet can be used with it).

EIGHT PROGRAMMES FOR FURTHER SPECIAL STUDY

No. 1

Realism in the German and French Cinema

1. *Kamaradschaft* (1931), Study Extract. Germany 20 mins.
 Production Nerofilm
 Direction G. W. Pabst
 Scenario Otten, Ernst Vajda and Lampel
 Photography Fritz Arno Wagner, R. Baberski
 Design Erno Metzner and Karl Vollbrecht
2. *Wages of Fear* (1953), French
 Direction Henri-Georges Clouzot
 Music Georges Auric

Starring
Yves Monton

No. 2

Contemporary Theme in Japanese Cinema

1. *Children of Hiroshima* (1953), Japanese
 Two Study Extracts
2. *Yukiwarisu* (1950), Japanese

No. 3

Programme of Biographical Films

1. *The Story of Dr. Karve* (1958), Indian Documentary 20 mins.
2. *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky* (1938), Russian
 Production Soyuzdetfilm, Moscow
 Direction Mark Donskoi
 Scenario I. Gruzdev
 Photography P. Yermolov and I. Malov
 Music Lev Schwartz
 Based on Maxim Gorky's Autobiography

No. 4

Programme of Films of Social and Educative Value

1. *Night Mail* (1936), British 20 Mins.
 Production G.P.O. Film Unit
 Producer John Grierson
 Direction and Scenario Basil Wright and Harry Watt
 Photography H.E. Fowle and Jonah Jones
 Music Benjamin Britten
 Verse W.H. Auden

2. *Children of Hiroshima* (1953), Study Extract. Japanese
3. *The Quiet One* (1947), American Documentary 77 mins.
 Producers Joseph Burstyn and Janice Loeb
 Direction Sidney Meyers
 Script James Agee

No 5

Documentary Film Classics

1. *Industrial Britain* (1933), British 20 mins.
 (See also Programme No. 5 of Film Classics)
2. *Song of Ceylon* (1934-35), British 40 mins.
 Production Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board
 Producer John Grierson
 Direction, Scenario and Photography Basil Wright
 Assistant John Taylor
 Music Walter Leigh
3. *World of Plenty* (1943), British 45 mins.
 Production Ministry of Information
 Producer Paul Rotha
 Direction Paul Rotha
 Scenario Eric Knight

No. 6

Programme of Experimental Films

1. *Symphony of Life* (1955), Indian Documentary 20 mins.
2. *Boundary Lines* (1947), American 10 mins.
3. *Begone Dull Care* (1949), Canadian Colour 9 mins.
4. *Zero De Conduite* (1933), French
 Production Arquis Film
 Direction and Scenario Jean Vigo
 Photography Boris Kaufman
 Music Maurice Jaubert
 Lyrics Charles Goldblatt
 Cast
 Jean Deste, Robert Le Flon,
 Du Veron, Delphin, Mme. Emile.

No. 7

The Importance of Editing in the Films of Sergei Eisenstein

1. *General Line* (1926-29), Silent Russian

Production	Sovkino
Direction and Scenario	Sergei M. Eisenstein and Grigori Alexandrov
Assistant Direction	Maxim Shtraukh and M. Gomorov
Photography	Eduard Tisse
Cast	
Marfa Lapkina	Herself

2. *Time in The Sun* (1931-32 and 1939-40) Mexican-American

Original Producers	Mr. and Mrs. Upton Sinclair
Direction and Scenario	Sergei M. Eisenstein and Grigori Alexandrov
Assistant	Grigori Alexandrov
Photography	Eduard Tisse

(The film directed in Mexico was entitled *Que Viva Mexico*. Upton Sinclair refused to let Eisenstein complete or edit the film. Seven years later *Time in the Sun* was completed using Eisenstein's material)

Producer of <i>Time in the Sun</i>	Marie Seton
Commentary	Marie Seton and Paul Burnford
Editing	Marie Seton and Paul Burnford
Music	Ponce Espino and Mexican village musicians

(The purpose of this programme is to provide study of Eisenstein's editing by showing one film edited by him as well as directed, the second being only directed but not edited by him)

No. 8

Programme for Special Film Appreciation Study

1. *The Critic and the Film No. 1, Great Expectations*, British Film Institute
(Analysis of film's first shots)

2. David Lean's *Great Expectations* (1946)
(Available from British Information Services by special arrangement and under special conditions)

THREE PROGRAMMES ON THE HISTORY OF CINEMA

No. 1

History of Cinema (1895-1925)

1. British Film Institute *Lumiere Programme*
2. British Film Institute *Selection of Early Films*
(Including those of D.W. Griffith)
3. Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)
(See also Programme No. 4 of Film Classics. The print is a sound print. For this programme it should be run silent at 16 frames per second (silent speed).)

No. 2

Development of the Silent Film (1916-1929)

1. Charlie Chaplin's *Dough and Dynamite* (1916)
2. Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1920-22)
3. John Grierson's *Drifters* (1929)

No. 3

History of the Animated Cartoon

- | | | |
|--|--------------|----------|
| 1. <i>Drawings That Walk and Talk</i> (1938) | British | 35 mins. |
| 2. <i>The Brave Heart of a Man</i> | Russian | 22 mins. |
| 3. <i>Trees and The Wind</i> | Czechoslovak | 7 mins. |
| 4. <i>*Energetically Yours</i> | British | 20 mins. |

*(By arrangement with the British Information Services or British Council)

APPENDIX—2

CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT DATES AND PERIODS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CINEMA

1895

After much research in photography and various inventions towards the motion-picture camera in both Britain and America, the moving picture was first perfected in France by the Lumiere brothers sufficiently for them to give public demonstrations. Following the first exhibition of films in London, the Lumiere's travelled to many countries introducing the cinematographic film to the world. Though very crude, the new invention became instantly very popular with the masses.

1895-1903

Many countries including Japan, America and Britain began to produce short films now known as 'early actualities'. At first these were the simplest of short scenes like a train arriving in a station, a wall falling down or a fire.

1903-1910

Films were very short, but each year they tended to become longer and the subjects more and more diverse. It was not long before film-makers in France, America and Britain realized the possibility of making films with a story. The first story film was *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) made in America by Edwin Porter. This is now a cherished film in many film museums. Britain commenced the story film with Cecil Hepworth's *Rescued by Rover*. In France, the pioneer of many different styles of films was Georges Melies, who came to film-making from a theatre of magic. His films abound in trick shots and fanciful scenes and the most famous and ambi-

tious of his films is *Trip to the Moon*, based on the 'science-fiction' novel of Jules Verne. This, too, is a cherished film in some film museums. Another French film pioneer, Fernand Zecca, attempted to reconstruct current events of historic importance. The most important of these was the 1905 *Mutiny of the Battleship Potemkin* (1906), an event taking place during the Russian Revolution of 1905. During 1907-08, the Frenchman, Emil Cohl, invented the animated cartoon film.

1910-1914

Films had become longer and there was now an attempt to make the popular motion-picture somewhat more cultural in tone and theme. Famous stage actors in France and Britain were induced to appear in short films of their well-known stage performances. The best known of these films today is the French actress, Sarah Bernhardt's film performance, *Queen Elizabeth*. America commenced the creation of the 'film star' system. In the forefront of this innovation was the film director, David Wark Griffith, one of the great pioneers of cinematic development. He can be called the father of the story film as we know it today. American film-makers began to move to Hollywood in California because the climate and scenery were very suited to the making of films. Italy produced the spectacle film *Quo Vadis* (1912).

1914-1918

D.W. Griffith directed the first film to inspire some serious study of the film medium. This film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1913-14) is one of the milestones in cinematic development. Even when seen today it has some memorable sequences, for example, the battle scenes. Several close-ups appear in this film as a new innovation. Another film of Griffith, *In tolerance*, (1918) had four stories set in different historic periods and it was by far the most ambitious film attempted. These two Griffith films greatly influenced subsequent film production in all countries attempting to make films. In 1914, Charlie Chaplin, a British vaudeville comedian, went to America and began to make his first 'slapstick' comedies which instantly captivated

the world. Since the European powers were at war (1914-1918), the American film began to enjoy the international distribution which had hitherto been enjoyed by Britain and France. By the end of the war, America had gained the monopoly of international distribution of films. In 1913, India produced the first Indian film—*Harischandra*—which received some international exhibition. During this period, Sweden was making the most artistic films and influencing technique in Germany and France.

1919

In Sweden, Mauritz Stiller directed his masterpiece, *Sir Arne's Treasure* (1919). In Germany, Robert Wiene directed the first 'art' film—*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*—which ranks as one of the most important early film classics. Subsequently, from 1919 to 1933, Germany became very important in the production of artistic films. German film technicians and directors greatly advanced the technique of film-making, particularly in the field of camera work and lighting. The most important German directors were F. W. Murnau, Fritz Lang and G. V. Pabst. With the rise of Hitler many of Germany's most noted directors and cameramen became refugees. In 1919, Robert Flaherty, 'the father of the documentary film' commenced his first epic of a distant people—*Nanook of the North*—the story of an Eskimo family in Canada's frozen north. This is another very important milestone in cinema.

1920-24

A great deal of experiment in film-making took place in Germany, Sweden, France (Rene Clair is one of the directors who started work at this period), and the Soviet Union where, after the Revolution of 1917, the film was recognized as having great socio-political importance and was, therefore, given state support. Many important film classics were produced during these years. In India and Japan film-making became an industry and very soon both these countries were producing more films per year than was even the average in America. Chaplin directed the only film in which he did not act—*Woman of Paris* (1923). Also in Hollywood, Erich von Stroheim directed his masterpiece, *greed* (1923-24).

1925

The Russian film *Battleship Potemkin* was directed by the 27 year old Sergei Eisenstein, now very often considered to be the greatest figure of cinematography, *Potemkin* was the first film of the so-called 'Russian School of Cinema' and it influenced film technique in many countries. The great importance of this film was the use of real people instead of actors and the methods of editing. From 1925 to 1929 the Russian films directed by Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Alexander Dovzhenko were dominant among artistic films because of the extremely expressive use of imagery. These films, together with German and French films, did a great deal to stimulate the rise of the film society and film club movement in France, Britain and Holland. The first film societies were formed in 1925.

1927-29

First sound film, or 'talkie'—*The Singing Fool*—was produced in America. This led to the decline and end of silent film production in all countries. The change-over was gradual. One of the last great silent films was produced in France in 1927-28 by the Dane, Karl Dreyer—*The Passion of Joan of Arc*. For some time the advent of the sound film caused a temporary return to theatrical style films which relied upon a great deal of dialogue. Many stage actors came into films. Sergei Eisenstein was sent from Russia to Western Europe to study the sound film. He gave lectures on his theories of film-making in Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland and Britain. These lectures, particularly in London and at the University of Cambridge, exerted a considerable influence upon the future development of a new kind of film—the documentary film.

1930-40

The quality of film-making improved in every country where film production was developed. In France, Britain and America the first independent cinemas were opened for the showing of foreign language films. French films became very popular among

intelligent film-goers, one of the finest was *The Grand Illusion* directed by Jean Renoir. Hollywood produced a series of very interesting films : *The Informer*, *I was a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, *The Life of Emile Zola*. Britain's hitherto backward film industry began to improve, but the special contribution of Britain to cinematography was the extensive production of documentary films. This period also saw the development of colour films, one of the first important ones being *Becky Sharp*, a Hollywood production. With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the documentary and information film became of great national importance in Britain, the Soviet Union and America. As the 1940's came, documentary production was initiated in Canada, Australia and shortly afterwards, in India.

1940-45

The political and social value of films became greatly enhanced during the war years. During this period the idea of co-productions was developed ; but a great deal of film producing effort was harnessed in different countries to the demands of war. One of the most daring films of this period was Chaplin's *Great Dictator*, and the most artistic, Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, Part I.

1945-50

With the end of the war in 1945, films from two countries—Italy and Japan—countries which previously had not made important contributions to the international film scene, made a similar impact on the films of Germany and the Soviet Union following the First World War. The Italian film, commencing with the 1945 picture, *Open City*, created a sensation. With this film there arose a new theory of film-making called 'new realism' (neo-realism), which meant films that dealt with the lives and problems of ordinary Italian people in a very realistic manner. The motive underlying these films was humanistic. Then in 1950 Japan burst on the world film scene with the remarkable film *Rashomon*, directed by Akira Kurosawa. Since this time Japan and Italy have been making outstanding films. New national film industries began to appear in countries where there had previously been no produc-

tion, or very little production, notably the countries of Eastern Europe and Central and Latin America. Britain produced a number of notable films, including many comedies.

1950-55

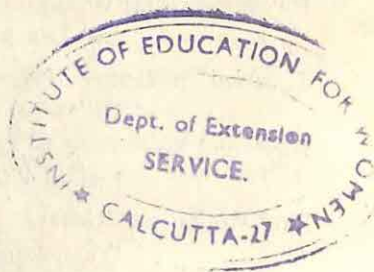
Brazil, Spain, Greece, Ceylon, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia all began to contribute films of interest. Czechoslovakia emerged as the contributor of internationally recognized and popular puppet films. The first feature film, *Rekava*, was produced in Ceylon at the same time as the Bengali film, *Pather Panchali*, directed by Satyajit Ray was released in India. Holland and Denmark, concentrating on documentary film production, produced a number of interesting films. Arne Sucksdorff, the Swedish director of documentaries whose *Great Adventure* had received international distribution, commenced his colour cinema-scope picture, *Jungle Tale*, in India, shooting it on the life of the Marias.

1955-60

In the spring of 1956 India emerged on the world scene of cinematography when *Pather Panchali* won a special award at the Cannes Film Festival for the year's best 'human document'. In 1957, Ray's sequel to *Pather Panchali*—*Aparajito*—won the highest award at the Venice Film Festival, and in 1959 the third and final film of the trilogy—*Apur Sansar*—won the Sutherland award at the London Film Festival. *Pather Panchali* and *Apur Sansar* both won the national award. During these years Sweden again became important as the country producing striking films, notably the films directed by Ingmar Bergman—*The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*. Poland contributed two unusual films both of which gained international recognition—*Eve Wants to Sleep*, a comedy, and *Ashes and Diamonds*. It can be seen that there has been a great expansion of film production in all quarters of the world. It should be noted that countries like the Philippines are now producing as many as 80 films a year while a small country like South Korea produced an excellent comedy, *Wedding Day*, in 1956. Cinemascope and many versions of the wide screen have become entrenched methods of production in the commercial film.

industries. Experiments in three dimensional production have taken place in the U. S., the U.S.S.R and Czechoslovakia, but still it appears that the most important films from an artistic point of view are made in black and white and for screens of ordinary dimensions. What counts in the production of a major film whether it be in America, Britain, the Soviet Union, India or Japan is the creative imagination of the director rather than the technical equipment and tricks he is able to employ. It should be noted that the film *Pather Panchali*, which has been acclaimed as a great and unique film, was largely photographed with a second-hand hired Wall camera, and that, with the exception of the Art Director, no one, not even Satyajit Ray the director, had had any previous experience of film-making. Ray's only training for making a masterpiece was to have been a founder-member of the Calcutta Film Society and to have made a concentrated effort to see as many of the world's best films as he possibly could.

In 1958, Eisenstein's long banned *Ivan the Terrible* was finally released to the public.



APPENDIX—3

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